

Brussels
Guardian
Biotech blighted
by research row

Saturday March 14 1998

Abu Dhabi D 8.50
Alaska US 2
Andorra FF 10
Australia A 3.50
Austria S 3.50
Belgium B 7.00
Belarus LV 1.50
Canada C 3.50
Czechia CZ 1.50
Cyprus C 1.50
Denmark D 1.50
Ecuador E 1.50
Egypt E 1.50
Finland F 1.50
France F 1.50
Germany D 1.50
Greece D 1.50
Hong Kong HK 3.50
Hungary H 1.50
Ireland I 1.50
Israel I 1.50
Italy I 1.50
Japan J 1.50
Korea K 1.50
Kuwait K 1.50
Latvia L 1.50
Lithuania L 1.50
Luxembourg L 1.50
Malta M 1.50
Mauritius M 1.50
Mexico M 1.50
Morocco M 1.50
Netherlands N 1.50
Norway N 1.50
Oman O 1.50
Pakistan P 1.50
Poland P 1.50
Portugal P 1.50
Romania R 1.50
Russia R 1.50
Slovakia S 1.50
Slovenia S 1.50
Spain S 1.50
Sweden S 1.50
Switzerland S 1.50
Taiwan T 1.50
Thailand T 1.50
Turkey T 1.50
USA US 3.50

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL
NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

The Week cover story

Alan McGee: don't preach about drugs, Mr Straw

G2 with European weather

Michael Palin

Almost the full Monty

The Week, page 15

Libby Brooks

Fat is still a feminist issue

Saturday opinion, page 9

On the border of despair



Andrew Higgins, one of the first journalists to meet North Koreans facing mass

starvation, hears tales of misery from those forced to make perilous forays into China in search of food

THROUGH three long North Korean winters, the mother of three waited stoically as hunger pared her body until she weighed less than she did three decades ago as a teenage girl.

Last week, terrifying talk swept through her mountain mining town and fear finally conquered fatalism. The government had announced — not to its own people but they heard rumours — that food stocks would run out by the middle of this month, about now. It was time to risk everything, she calculated. Or die.

With a friend, she trekked 30 miles to the border with China wearing thin cotton shoes, a ragged red top and a worn jacket. After nightfall, she stepped on to the ice still covering much of the Tumen river, no longer merely a frontier between states but a

boundary between starvation and survival.

For an awful moment, the gamble seemed lost. The ice cracked. The 44-year-old mother of three plunged into the frigid water but managed to wade to the other side.

Two days later, cowering in a warm farmhouse out of reach of North Korean border guards, she was still terrified, still filthy but also still certain of her reckless act of self-preservation. "We have to rely on ourselves now. If you don't, you starve."

In a few days, she hopes to return the way she came with whatever food she has been able to scrounge, scavenge and barter. Her target is a 20kg sack of corn meal, more than her family of five has eaten for the past two months.

Her return could be even more perilous. North Korea has just put its troops on a war footing, an annual ritual of mass mobilisation. Tanks and troops stage mock battles. Even traffic police don camouflage capes to direct phantom traffic. As the country starves, the military clings to fossilised rites of vigilance.

Since North Korea first sounded the alarm after flooding in 1995, governments, aid workers and academics have argued over the scale of the crisis. Their different versions are often based on the same source: chaperoned and meticulously scripted visits to schools and hospitals.

We see only what they want to show us. One week a kindergarten is full of mal-



Malnourished three- and four-year-olds at North Korea's Tokchon nursery. Aid workers say 10,000 children a month starve. PHOTOGRAPH: HILARY MACKENZIE

nourished kids. A week later it is full of well-fed children doing dances and singing songs. Frankly, we have no idea what is really going on," admitted one aid worker.

When Pyongyang wants sympathy — which it does now as the United Nations World Food Programme makes a new food appeal — it raises slightly an opaque curtain of secrecy, paranoia and pride. Once aid is on its way, the shutters come down.

Arithmetic over mortality rates has obscured a catastro-

phe that goes far beyond maize and rice. A modern industrial state of more than 20 million people is withering away: fuel is scarcer than food; factories have seized up; entire cities go dark at night.

A journey across the country on an electrified rail network can take weeks because of power cuts — and kill off weaker passengers en route. Only the collected works of the late patriarch Kim Il-sung are in abundance: pupils still strong enough to attend school write

lessons in their margins, according to one refugee. Thousands have slipped across the Tumen river, skirting border guards enfeebled by hunger and ignoring China's own feeble protection against trespassers: signs in Chinese and Korean warning that it is "forbidden to traverse the border illegally."

Some dream of making it to South Korea or settling in China; many, particularly jobless mothers, cross over for a few days to forage and bargain for food.

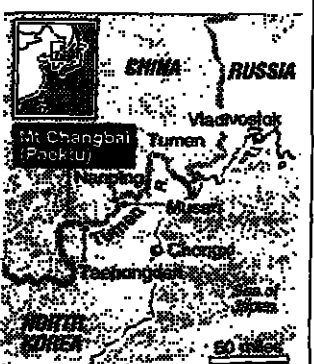
"They often pretend they are trading but in reality it is begging," said an old woman who has given sanctuary and sustenance to a stream of malnourished escapees. "They cry when they see what we feed the pigs. Our pigs eat far better than people do over there."

The Chinese side of the river is inhabited by ethnic Koreans linked by blood, history and language to North Korea. Periodic swoops by Chinese police and fines of up to \$200 for helping intruders

have failed to curb their charity — and illicit commerce.

Many of the more desperate refugees flee into the trackless forests of Changbai mountain, a sacred volcanic peak that Koreans call Mount Paektu and which North Korean propaganda celebrates as the birthplace of Kim Il-sung's son and successor, Kim Jong-il. Those hoping to return stick closer to the river.

In a riverside hamlet on the road to Changbai mountain, turn to page 2, column 3



Lawrence: officer accused

Murder case superintendent faces neglect of duty charge

David Pallister

THE Police Complaints Authority took the unusual step yesterday of announcing a recommendation that a senior serving officer involved in the Stephen Lawrence murder case should face a disciplinary charge of neglect of duty.

The authority said it had been forced into revealing the decision prematurely because of the public inquiry into the investigation of the racist murder beginning on Monday.

A spokesman said: "It was felt important that all the officers involved and the Lawrence family themselves should know if any of the officers face disciplinary charges."

The Police Superintendents' Association (PSA) confirmed last night that the officer was one of their members.

Dev Parkinson, assistant general secretary of the PSA, said: "He will be getting full legal support from us. He is innocent until proven guilty and deserves a full defence."

Mr Parkinson said the officer — whom he declined to

name — was the only one of four superintendents who worked on the case who was still a serving officer. "The others all retired in the normal course of events."

The Metropolitan Police are considering the recommendation, made by PCA member Ms Jo Dobry. If the police chose to reject it, the authority has the power to direct that the charge is laid.

The PCA finished its inquiry last December with a damning report about the way it had been conducted.

Stephen, aged 18, died of death from stab wounds at a bus stop in Edgware, south-east London, one night in April 1993 after being attacked by a gang of white youths. The Crown Prosecution Service twice refused to prosecute five local suspects and a private prosecution by the family founded at the Old Bailey in 1996.

An inquest in 1997 decided that Stephen was unlawfully killed in an unprovoked racist attack by five white youths.

The PCA report said the police had failed to follow up lines of inquiry, had ignored vital witnesses and handled



Stephen Lawrence: public inquiry starts on Monday

identification evidence badly. It said: "In general, the investigation has identified weaknesses in the leadership, direction and quality of work of the first murder investigation."

"The quality of supervision of officers was poor and assumptions were made about the standard of work being carried out that would not have withstood proper scrutiny."

Last month Scotland Yard gave the PCA its private response to the report which was considered unacceptable.

A member of the Stephen Lawrence campaign, Ros

Howells, said last night that everyone, including the Lawrence family, was pleased by the news. She said: "We have always known that the police failed. It's a pity that it's just one police officer and the others have retired, but we think it's great news."

"I think this has come as quite a shock to Doreen Lawrence. But five years on we will never feel good until the perpetrators of the crime are behind bars."

Hours before the announcement, Sir William Macpherson, the retired High Court judge heading the inquiry, visited the murder scene.

He spent several minutes looking at a memorial stone in the pavement where Stephen died, which was defaced last week. Police are still looking for the culprits.

Sir William said: "It seemed to me right to come here and remind people of the terrible events of five years ago."

He said: "One of the reasons we are here is to mark our disgust at the vandalism that was perpetrated. It was an unspeakable act."

But he admitted: "New prosecutions are unlikely as everyone who knows about this case must realise, but it's impossible to forecast what will come out of this inquiry."

Anti-hunting MPs say fight goes on

Michael White
Political Editor

ANTI-hunting MPs and their allies last night promised to continue bringing legislation to ban fox hunting before Parliament until they overcome the Tory-led guerrilla forces which yesterday killed Mike Foster's bill.

After filibustering had blocked decisive progress for the second successive Friday, Mr Foster defiantly insisted that his bill was "alive and kicking" and would be back in the legislative queue next Friday, with its impassioned backbench supporters.

"We are coming back, we are not going to pack up on this bill. If my opponents think they can abuse the House and the electorate by engaging in delaying tactics, they are sadly mistaken because the British electorate want to see this bill passed," the Labour MP for Worcester told reporters.

But there are four other private member's bills in the queue ahead of Mr Foster's Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill to get their Commons third reading. And pro-hunting MPs promised to "talk it out" again, as they did

yesterday. "This bill is still a mess. It's badly drafted and it's wrong in principle. It needs a few more days attention," said David Maclean, the former Tory Home Office minister, who is organising the hunters' rearguard action, described as "parliamentary vandalism."

Mr Foster insists that he and his allies will bring in new bills or seek to amend criminal justice bills to achieve the same effect.

They now hope that public opinion will force ministers to provide government time. Removal of the hereditary peers, pillars of the hunting classes, will also help them. Kate Farnham, spokeswoman for the Campaign For The Protection of Hunted Animals — an umbrella group of anti-hunting organisations, said: "We will be redoubling our efforts. We will continue to use every opportunity during the lifetime of this parliament to secure a ban."

Yesterday's five hours of debate were all but doomed when Speaker Betty Boothroyd ruled against a clause to outlaw fox hunting by amending the 1966 Wild Mammals (Protection) Act. Tony Blair was absent, working at Chequers, despite his declared support for the bill.

The Guardian International Umbrella



Protect yourself from the elements with the stylish Guardian International umbrella.

This large blue and white golfing umbrella features a fox frame and wooden handle, £19.50. Price includes postage, packing and handling charges.

To place your order please fill in the form below and send it to: Guardian International Office, PO Box 355, Bushey, Herts WD22 2NA, UK with a cheque or money order for the full amount or fill in your Visa/Mastercard details.

Please send me _____ Guardian International umbrella/s at £19.50; cost £ _____ I enclose a cheque/ money order for the sum of £ _____ or please debit my Visa/ Mastercard account.

Card No: _____

Expiry date: _____

Signature _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Country: _____

Please allow up to 28 days for delivery.

Inside

Britain

A British couple were named as the authors of the controversial Home Office report on the Greek holiday industry. **4**

World News

Alan Cook, the Foreign Secretary, said that the controversial Jewish settlement of Har Homa despite Israeli objections. **5**

Finance

Track inspectors claim Britain's rail infrastructure is starved of investment, with public safety pushed to the limit. **12**

Sport

Mark Ramprakash scored his first Test century and Graham Thorpe 100 as England piled on the runs in Barbados. The Week **24**

Weather 2; Obituaries 7

Comment 9; Crossword 12

The Week

Crossword 24

Sport 19-24



[illegible]

North Koreans
order of despair

Battle of the screens leaves Sega in the red

Scramble for market share has left Japanese giant showing its first ever loss. **Simon Beavis** and **Jack Schofield** report

SEGA, the Japanese computer games giant, yesterday acknowledged for the first time the scale of the defeat it has suffered at the hands of Sony and Nintendo when it disclosed it would make its first ever loss.

The admission from the company that its games division has racked up losses of 47 billion yen (£219.9 million) follows a bitter battle in the mushrooming games market, now estimated to be worth more than \$15 billion.

Most of the losses came in three US subsidiaries — Sega of America, Sega Soft networks and Sega Entertainment — which are to be restructured.

It means the group is now expecting to record a net loss in the year to March of 39 billion yen (£182.5 million) compared with a forecast of 15 billion yen profit.

The losses are the culmination of a fight for market share which has seen Sega's Saturn games console pitched in a losing battle primarily with Sony's PlayStation and then with Nintendo's N64.

The vain scramble for market share has left it in the sort of hole that even Sega hero Sonic the Hedgehog would find hard to get out of.

Sega's president, Shoichiro Irimajiri, told a press conference at the Tokyo stock exchange that Saturn had been a "bottleneck on earnings" for the three financial years since its launch into a head-to-head with the PlayStation.

"We've got hurt and we'll apply the lessons we've learned as we develop our replacement," he said.

But the group was immediately marked down sharply by Moody's credit rating agency, which said it was concerned about whether Sega would stay competitive in the fast changing video-game market overseas.

The Saturn system and the PlayStation were launched in Japan almost back to back in

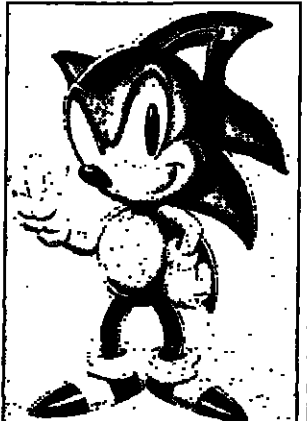
1994, both using 32-bit technology. But it became quickly clear that Sony had come up with a superior system and better ways to market it.

"Sega, very early on, was perceived to have been the second best," said Nick Gibson, an industry analyst with Durlacher Securities.

Sega expected to capitalise on the success of its previous generation 16-bit Sega Mega-drive system, but found success did not automatically pass down the generations.

To make things worse, it was trounced by Nintendo's 64-bit offering, the N64, even though it was launched almost two years later.

The last comparative figures from Durlacher show that across the world 23 million PlayStations had been in-



Sonic the Hedgehog: Sega's best-known hero

stalled against 8.2 million Sega Saturns and 8.5 million N64s. Since then, it has been estimated that around the world 650,000 PlayStations were given as gifts last Christmas.

In the UK, the company claims 2.2 million PlayStations have been installed. It has 70 per cent of a market which grew to a record 2890 million in 1997 and is expected to reach £1.1 billion this year.

That success is repeated in almost every other main market. In the US, Sega recorded a measly 8 per cent share of hardware sales last year against Sony's 53 per cent and Nintendo's 39 per cent. In Europe, the pattern was broadly the same.

Only in Japan, where Sega has maintained an unusually high level of consumer loyalty, has it managed to hold off the challenge of Nintendo and grab second place to Sony.

Although Sony dominates the market, there is no guarantee it will be able to carry its supremacy into the next generation of games consoles.

In fact, the whole market structure could be changed by the growing popularity of Wintel PCs — personal computers based on Intel processors and Microsoft Windows operating systems.

Here Sega hopes to capture the initiative. Next year it is expected to be the first into the market with a more powerful machine. It will have far superior processing power to anything currently on sale and advanced publicity suggests it will be the first to be truly compatible with personal computers.

Sega is working on its project with a number of co-developers including Microsoft, which is reported to be developing an operating system based on its Windows CE.

Sony — confident it can stretch the attractions of PlayStation with an ever-increasing games library — has not announced a successor.

But analysts disagree on whether the new system will restore Sega to the profile it enjoyed with its Megadrive. Some suggest its biggest advantage could be complacency from Sony.

Others are more cautious. Mike Welch, a consultant with the hi-tech research agency Inteco, says some game companies have come back before. "It depends how badly you get crushed."



Sony's new baby version of the PlayStation, above, and spoilt for choice, below: computer games on sale at Toys 'R' Us

PHOTOGRAPHS: FRANK BARON and MARTIN ARQUES

Computer masterminds still have all to play for

New technology leaves field open for the title of games console king

Jack Schofield
Computer Editor

WHILE global brands such as Coke and Rolls-Royce have dominated their markets for decades, rapid technological advances mean it is impossible to predict with any certainty if Sony will remain games console king.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, for example, American-based Atari dominated the market with its VCS (Video Computer System), and Space Invaders was all the rage. The idea that the \$2 billion giant could be overthrown by a tiny Japanese manufacturer of playing cards — Nintendo — seemed absurd, and many American retailers initially refused even to stock its machines.

However, thanks to a Go-kart called Donkey Kong and a moustachioed Italian plumber called Mario — both created by Nintendo's star games designer, Shigeru Miyamoto — the impossible happened.

The Nintendo Entertainment System swept the world. Super Mario became more familiar to American kids than Mickey Mouse and, with a single product, Nintendo's annual sales overtook the mighty Sony.

But soon the technology changed again. Nintendo's 8-bit games console had almost

wiped out Atari's 4-bit machine, but then Sega entered the market with a more powerful 16-bit console, the Mega-Drive (sold in the US as the Sega Genesis). By 1992, Super Mario was playing second fiddle to a new cartoon character, the improbable Sonic the Hedgehog.

Nintendo eventually responded with an improved console, the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES) but by this stage the pattern was clear.

Being new to the games console market, Sony worked out what it needed to do to satisfy the various parts of the industry: not just games players but programmers, distributors and retailers, particularly with regard to pricing.

Doug Goodwin, Sony Computer Entertainment's UK sales director, said the company was simply using skills it had learned in the FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) market.

A lot of Sony's understanding of the games market came from taking over Psygnosis, a games programming company based in Liverpool.

Psygnosis's involvement also ensured that the PlayStation had some great British games, such as Wipeout and Destruction Derby, to supplement the flow of arcade hits from Japan.

But PlayStation has not found a character to symbolise the brand: Crash Bandicoot doesn't have the cachet of Mario or even Sonic. The most popular character of the past two years has been the impressively athletic but unusually busty Lara Croft, from Eidos's Tomb Raider games. And Lara is not exclusive to the PlayStation.

Half a dozen firms had already set out to win the battle for the next generation of 32-bit consoles, and most agreed that they would be based on cheap CD-ROM disc technology rather than cartridges packed with expensive chips.

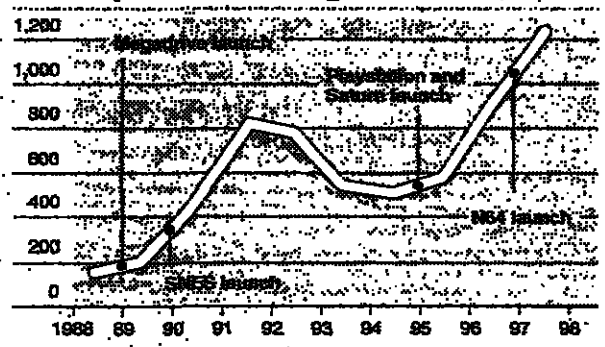
The first to market included Commodore's CDTV, Philips CD-I, the 3DO player backed by Panasonic, and the Sega Saturn. The first three were miserable failures. The



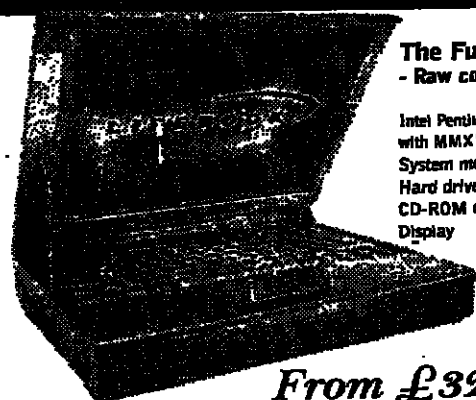
Playing the game

Sony PlayStation	Nintendo N64	Sega Saturn
Launch date	1996	1994
1994	1996	1994
1996	1999	1997
Anticipated sales peak		
Console price		
£129.99	£99.00	£99.99
Units sold globally	8.5 million	8.2 million
Units sold in the UK	600,000	90,000

UK computer and video game market, £m



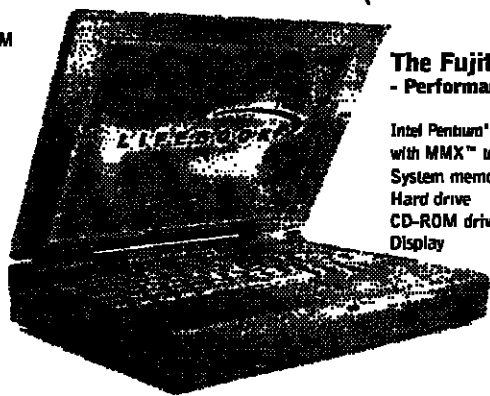
Better performance. Better prices.



The Fujitsu LifeBook 900 series
- Raw computing power

Intel Pentium® processor 233 MHz
with MMX™ technology
System memory 32-160 Mb SDRAM
Hard drive 5 Gb
CD-ROM drive 20X modular
Display 13.3" XGA TFT

From £3230
(£3795.25 inc VAT)



From £1040
(£1222 inc VAT)

The Fujitsu LifeBook 700 series
- Performance & all round functionality

Intel Pentium® processor 133 - 166 MHz
with MMX™ technology
System memory 16-96 Mb SDRAM
Hard drive 1.6 - 3.2 Gb
CD-ROM drive 20X modular (optional)
Display 12.1" SVGA STN or TFT

Warranty
3 year International - courier collect & return



From £2845
(£3342.88 inc VAT)

The Fujitsu LifeBook 600 series
- The ultimate in mobile computing

Intel Pentium® processor 200 MHz
with MMX™ technology
System memory 32-96 Mb SDRAM
Hard drive 3.2 Gb
CD-ROM drive 20X in LAN
enhancement unit
Display 12.1" XGA TFT

The Fujitsu LifeBook™ series of notebook computers. Innovative technology and performance from one of the world's largest computer companies. And the dependability and value for money that have made us Europe's fastest-growing notebook supplier*.

* Q3 '96 to Q3 '97, source: IDC

All models include Word '97 CD

For further information please contact: FUJITSU EXPRESS RESPONSE CENTRE, FREEPOST BD2715, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 1BR Tel: 0345 023 985 Fax: 01756 702 856

62a G.
Title _____ Forename _____ Surname _____ Job Title _____
Company Name/Address _____
Post Code _____ Tel No _____ Fax No _____

Better call now!

0345 023 985

LIFEBOOK

FUJITSU

PCs • NOTEBOOKS • SERVERS

THE INTEL INSIDE LOGO AND PENTIUM ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS AND LOGO IS A TRADEMARK OF THE INTEL CORPORATION.

4 BRITAIN

Romanies from the Czech Republic and Slovakia seek asylum from increasing violence as racists carry on the 'work of Hitler'

Refugees hope for appeals lifeline

Duncan Campbell and Kate Connolly in Prague

LATE on a Sunday evening in February, 48-year-old Eliska Pilarova, a radio journalist, was strolling with her husband along the banks of the River Lebe in East Bohemia in the Czech Republic, when she heard cries for help. A strong current was sweeping a young woman downstream. Mrs Pilarova jumped in to help. As the two clung on to a tree root, Helena Biharova, a Roman mother of four, told her would-be rescuer that she had been attacked by three skinheads minutes earlier. They had beaten and kicked her before throwing her in the river, she said. Before she was sucked under and drowned, she called out the names of her alleged attackers.

Six days later, Helena's corpse was laid out as Roman tradition dictates, in an open coffin in a church in her native North Moravia. The bruises on her face and hands were clearly visible. Some of the 500 mourners, who included President Vaclav Havel's wife, Dagmar, chanted: "Death for a death," and "Skinheads are carrying on the work of Hitler."

At the funeral, Helena's father said that his family would seek political asylum, possibly in the United States. Three skinheads have been arrested and charged with

racially-motivated murder in what is the latest in a spate of attacks.

Already this year serious incidents have included an attack on a Roman man in North Moravia, who escaped from his blazing apartment after neo-Nazis threw a Molotov cocktail through his window. In January, a Roman woman suffered severe burns after a firebomb attack in Krnov, North Moravia.

The news of the attacks coincides with the hearings of the latest batch of Roman or gypsy asylum seekers from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. So far, of 400 Czech and Slovak nationals who applied in Britain for asylum since February 1997, along with 80 dependents, one has been allowed to stay, and that person only for six months, according to Home Office figures.

The arrival of gypsies from the Czech Republic and Slovakia in Dover last autumn provoked a sometimes violent response in Britain. Many had come to Britain following a Czech television documentary showing some of the bestial aspects of British life. The National Front marched in Dover to protest about their presence.

At the end of March, 48 Slovak appeals are due to be heard. Both Czech and Slovak families are now waiting in London, Dover and elsewhere in Kent while their cases are processed. But so far the indication is that few will succeed.



A relative mourns Helena Biharova who drowned after being thrown into a river by skinheads. PHOTOGRAPH: JULIE DENESHA

Deri Hughes-Roberts of the Refugee Legal Centre, which is representing 48 Slovak asylum seekers at appeals before the Immigration Appeals

Authority, said that they were not aware of any positive decisions from the Home Office. "Nearly all the cases that have been refused

asylum have also been certified by the Home Office as 'manifestly unfounded' under a provision introduced by the Asylum and Immigra-

tion Act of 1996," he said. "The effect of certification is twofold: first, an appellant is subjected to a fast-track appeals procedure and second,

he or she is deprived of the right to apply for the leave to appeal against an adverse decision.

"It is contended on behalf of the appellants that there is a reasonable likelihood that should they return, they will face persecution in the form of threat to life, beatings, arbitrary arrest, restrictions on movement and choice of residence."

The Refugee Legal Centre says it has argued that Slovakia has little interest in protecting them. Rather, some politicians have incited their persecution. Vladimir Meciar, the Prime Minister of Slovakia, has said: "They [the gypsies] should be perceived as a problem group that is growing in size... If we do not deal with them now they will deal with us later."

Mr Hughes-Roberts said: "The feeling we have is that these cases have been classified as abusive and lacking in merit. That simply does not accord with the facts from the Czech Republic."

He added that the Home Office had come to this conclusion very early and that the introduction of new procedures which they had introduced, had not been warranted.

Home Office Minister Mike O'Brien in a written answer last month said that 400 Czech and Slovak nationals had applied for asylum in Dover between February 1997 and February 1998.

Of these, 190 had appealed and 75 of the appeals had been

dismissed or withdrawn and only one allowed.

A United Nations High Commission for Refugees report of Czech Roman Asylum-Seekers published this week suggests that authorities at local level have not provided "effective remedies against discrimination or threats to physical safety". In some cases, it advises, the authorities have been the ones discriminating.

In a recent case, Slavomir Cirkus, deputy mayor of Kladno, a few miles east of Prague, banned Roman children from the local swimming baths after an outbreak of hepatitis. Last summer, Liana Janackova, mayor of Maribor, paid airlines to take Romanies to Canada. One local authority suggested cutting child benefit to single Roman mothers as an incentive to get them to school and work.

The Czech government is anxious to prove itself as Nato and the European Union consider its admission. Its approach towards the "gypsy question" is likely to be monitored, and President Havel is aware of this. This week, he warned that manifestations of racism and xenophobia could affect entrance to the two bodies. He said Czech society had to decide whether to profess the idea of a "tribal state where the colour of skin is decisive in determining who is friend or foe, or to choose the democratic road of development where the rights of ethnic minorities are respected".

Retired couple murdered on Greek island

Helena Smith in Athens

A BRITISH couple have been found murdered in their retirement home on Cephalonia, the Greek island made famous as the setting for Louis de Bernières' novel *Captain Correlli's Mandolin*. The pair were found lying in a pool of blood after sustaining multiple stab wounds three months after moving into an idyllic villa in Kaminarata, a remote mountain village. Last night they were named as Roy Eccles, a 55-year-old former electrical engineer from Luton, and his 49-year-old wife Judith.

A long-time friend and neighbour, Richard Coward, aged 55, who introduced them to the hideaway, discovered the couple after they failed to answer his calls. The pair had been attacked as they slept.

"This has never happened before in Cephalonia," said Major Dimitrios Christoforatos, a senior police officer on the island. "Our community is in a state of deep shock."

The couple had only recently finished building their dream house on Cephalonia, the largest of five islands in the western Ionian chain.

At 600m above sea level, Kaminarata is the highest village on the island which draws thousands of British holidaymakers with its long stretches of unspoilt sandy beaches and spectacular mountains. The Eccles' home was one of four owned by Britons in the village.

"They were liked by the entire village and were apparently very pleasant people," said Christos Papadatos, the editor of the island's *Imerisios* newspaper. "On Cephalonia we have a great affection for the English. After all, it is they that have made our island famous with Captain Correlli's Mandolin."

Yesterday, Greece mounted a massive police operation on the island, dispatching experts and special forces from Athens to join the investigation.

Earlier in the day, police rounded up and arrested several illegal Albanian immigrants as possible suspects. Around 1,500 mostly undeclared Albanian economic refugees live on the island. A nationwide surge in crime in recent years has been largely blamed on immigrants who have streamed into Greece from the impoverished former socialist states.

But Major Christoforatos said the discovery of the couple's abandoned car, a British-registered black jeep, in the port town of Sami, 40km away from the scene of the crime, had led police to believe that the real culprits had probably already fled the island.

He said that the police's initial theory — that the murders had occurred as part of a bungled burglary — had been contradicted by the discovery of jewellery and other valuables in the house.

"We are not ruling out anything," the Major said. "It could have been a robbery gone wrong, a setting of old grudges, or the crime of passion. We believe that three people were probably involved in the murder and we are looking into everything."

The Eccles are among thousands of Britons to have bought retirement homes on Cephalonia. After local, British expatriates account for the majority of its 31,000 population, and thousands of British tourists have flocked to the earthquake-ravaged island since the publication of Captain Correlli's Mandolin.

One local tour guide said as many as one in five UK visitors now arrive armed with a book, a gripping tale of love and loss that takes place during the Italian occupation of Cephalonia.



Culture Secretary Chris Smith (left) and his European counterparts will be meeting in the North tomorrow to discuss national concerns. But what about local issues? DAVID WARD reports on the state of cultural facilities in the town

TEN European culture ministers who venture north tomorrow as guests of the Government will stay just outside Macclesfield, Cheshire, former centre of British silk weaving.

Not that they will see much of the town, for they will leave the four-star Shrigley Hall Hotel — former scene of the Norman Wisdom Golf Classic — only to make two trips to Manchester, 20 miles up the road.

To celebrate Britain's presidency of the European Union, they will pass the rest of their time discussing matters of cultural concern, including digital terrestrial television.

The hotel is in the hamlet of Pott Shrigley, which earned its place in television history as the home of a former producer of *Pinky and Perky*, the celebrated singing pigs.

If only the ministers could stay longer, they would find that Macclesfield faces a cul-

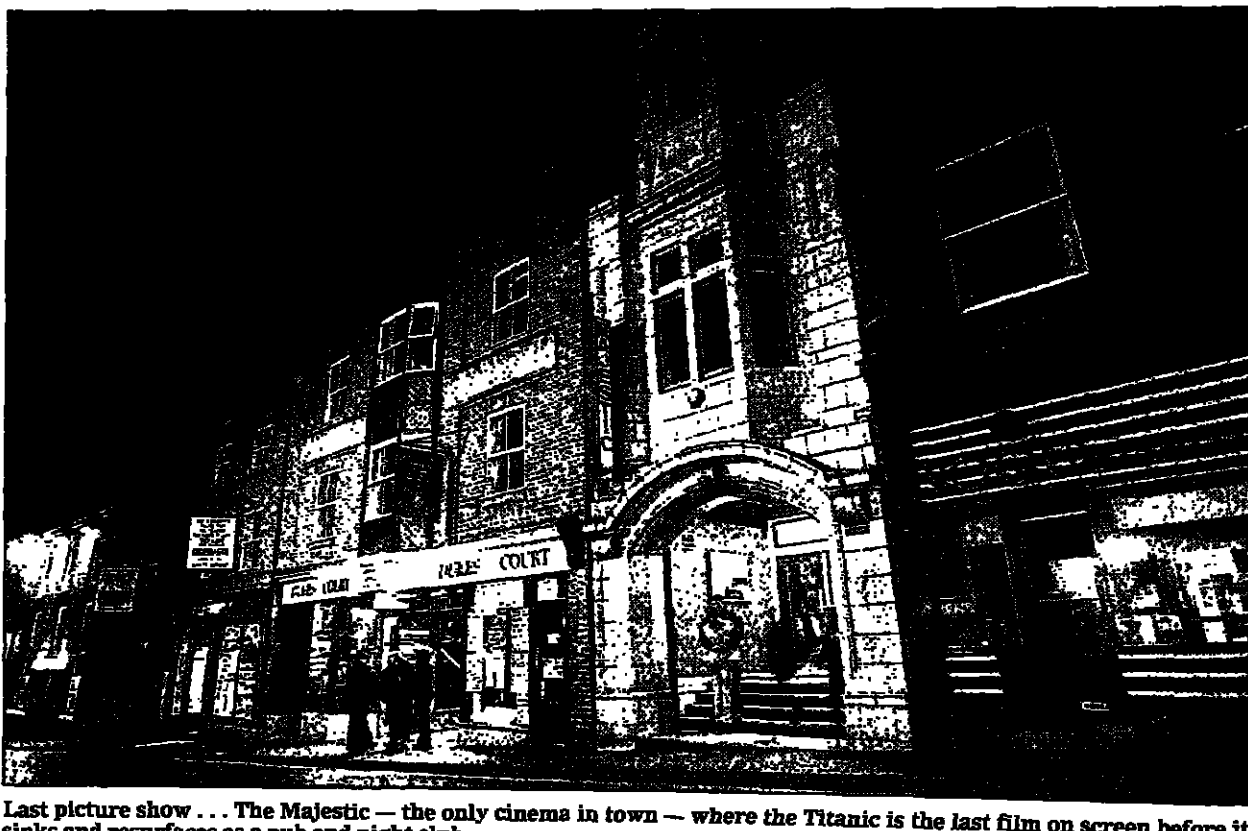
tural crisis. Because of funding cuts by the county council, the future of the town's museums (Egyptian mummies down by the crematorium; silk in Paradise Mill in the town centre) is in doubt.

What is certain is that its last remaining cinema will go down with the Titanic. The Majestic Picture House, which opened in 1922, will close at the end of the month and become a pub and night club.

The Majestic Theatre Group, which has put on musicals there for 26 years, faces a nomadic existence.

"It's a nightmare," said Keith Preece, the group's chairman, who would like to tell this to the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, who will be with his European colleagues at Shrigley Hall.

Sadly, the ministers are a week late for a concert in Macclesfield by the Northern Chamber Orchestra, famed for its Haydn recordings on the budget Naxos label. They



Last picture show... The Majestic — the only cinema in town — where the Titanic is the last film on screen before it sinks and resurfaces as a pub and night club. PHOTOGRAPH: DON MOPHEE

did Symphony No 29 last week, plus a new work by Edward Gregson.

"We have a very loyal audience for the eight concerts we give each season in Macclesfield," said Julie Cramer, the orchestra's administrator.

The ministers are much too early for one of the summer-time open air music-and-fireworks concerts staged by Macclesfield-based Performing Arts Management, a leading promoter in the field.

Nor will they be able to catch the Royal Shakespeare Company, which has regularly brought its touring small-scale shows to the leisure centre. The RSC, which

says tickets always sell well and fast, is giving the town a miss with this year's Romeo and Juliet.

One of its less well-known sons was the playwright, wit, poet and musician Maggot Johnson (1691-1773), whose play *Hurlo Thrumbo* (or *The Supernatural*) was staged at the Haymarket Theatre in London. It was described variously by contemporary critics as "a most sublime effort of human genius" and "full of absurd bombast and turgid nonsense".

Mr Johnson spent his last years in Macclesfield at Gawsorth Hall, stately home of Mary Fitton, the al-

leged dark lady of Shakespeare's sonnets. Other local stately homes include Lyne Hall — Pembroley in the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* and the place where Mr Darcy took his notorious dip — and Arley Hall, home of the first herbaceous border.

"We also have more millionaires than any London borough," said a council spokeswoman.

She would probably be less proud of the Macc Lads, a punkish band whose obscene lyrics terrorised the town in the 1980s, and whose tapes sold locally like hot cakes.

And she confessed ignorance of John Beaumont,

Methodist minister and composer, who died in Macclesfield in 1923. Of his works he said: "With respect to their merit, I shall leave the world to judge, only observing that I composed them with great pleasure to myself."

Beaumont was largely unknown until his choral pieces were revived by an enterprising local choir, which would have gladly signed the EU ministers had it been asked. The visitors instead are going to a concert in Manchester by the cash-strapped *Halles* orchestra, whose officials may pass round the hat during interval. How much will Mr Smith chip in?

Armageddon will miss Earth by 600,000 miles, say astronomers

Tim Radford

ASTRONOMERS yesterday admitted they had got the end of the world slightly wrong.

A mile-wide asteroid called 1997 XF11 will not hit the Earth on October 26, 2028. Instead of passing within 30,000 miles of the planet, it will miss by about 600,000 miles.

The volte-face was simply explained. Once they had triggered a delirious fission of fear the world over, astronomers discovered that asteroid XF11 was not quite as new as they thought.

The object was identified in December. Its track seemed to bring it across the Earth's orbit, so it was recorded as a potentially hazardous object.

Once the uproar began, however, other astronomers began looking at old records. They found that, in fact, XF11 had been spotted eight years' worth of information about the orbit pattern and meant that scientists could confirm that the huge lump of rock orbits the Sun every 21 months.

It would indeed move or less coincide with the Earth in 2028. But the new data now have the ominous visitor passing on the far side of the moon.

"We redid the analysis and the close approach distance moved out 600,000 miles, which is two and a half times the lunar orbit," said Don Yeomans, of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena. "Nobody can argue with it. This puts the nail in the coffin."

BSE hit farmers far less than feared, study finds

Paul Brown Environment Correspondent

THE BSE crisis was not nearly as disastrous for Britain as originally predicted, with some farmers gaining and new jobs being created, according to a government-funded report published yesterday.

Although the cost for the first 12 months was between £740 million and £980 million, the effect was mitigated on individual farms and businesses by government subsidies and compensation. These figures, for the first year after the probable link between BSE and new variant CJD was announced, are well below those used by ministers at the time.

The prediction of 46,000 jobs going was way off the mark, with only 1,000 net losses in the first 12 months, the report, commissioned by the Treasury and the Ministry of Agriculture, says.

Beef sales dropped 35 per

cent, but as a result of the increase in sales of other meat products — poultry, lamb and pork — plus subsidies to offset the BSE crisis, net farm income increased in 1996 compared with 1995.

Abattoirs were badly hit, but compensation payments and a fall in cattle prices actually helped lift profit margins. In the regulation sector an extra 300 to 500 jobs were created for inspectors and related posts.

The biggest losers were in Northern Ireland, followed by Scotland, and parts of northern and south-west England. In eastern counties of England and lowland areas, where pig and poultry farming are important, farmers gained, while their counterparts in the upland and western areas lost out.

The report says: "The BSE crisis occurred against a backdrop of existing changes in the beef industry and broader economy: falling demand for beef, overcapacity

in sections of the beef industry; increasing pressure to improve food hygiene; and the strong appreciation of sterling, which makes disentangling the precise impact of the BSE crisis difficult."

It says that in the first year the £7.5 billion of subsidy and compensation payments to farmers, abattoirs and other food businesses did "largely compensate" for the loss of output, but it warns that once those subsidies are removed this year, the hardship will increase. The Meat and Livestock Commission said domestic beef sales had recovered, but times ahead were going to be hard.

Ben Gill, president of the National Farmers' Union, said the report acknowledged that specialist beef and mixed livestock farmers were among the worst hit.

"There can be no doubt that the BSE crisis has completely devastated many family farms and many still face a bleak future," he said.

Geoffrey Gibbs

IT WAS, in the end, a tale of two cities. After months of consultation, with more than a dozen places vying for the coveted prize, Ron Davies, the Welsh Secretary, yesterday chose Cardiff as the home of the new Welsh Assembly.

As the people of Swansea mourned the death of a dream, the resurgent Welsh capital was buoyed still further by the prospect of another landmark building to add to its already large number of regeneration projects.

Once the world's biggest coal exporting ports, Cardiff coal exports ports, Cardiff with a population of about 315,000 — has been reinventing itself as a financial services, media, leisure and high-tech industry centre. Not only will it host this year's European Summit, and the 1999 rugby union World Cup, but developments like the 75,000-seat national rugby stadium and the Millennium

Centre for the Performing Arts, which will become the home of the Welsh National Opera, attest to its confidence and dynamic economy.

The purpose-built Welsh Assembly building will be chosen following a design contest, details of which will be unveiled once negotiations with developers are complete. A final decision on the precise site is expected within the next few weeks.

Announcing his decision at the Welsh Office in Cardiff yesterday, Mr Davies said the case for housing the 60-member assembly in the city was compelling. Cardiff was already a leading administrative and financial centre and to develop its potential as the capital of Wales it should become the leading political centre, too.

"Wales has invested some 40 years in promoting Cardiff as our capital city. We are a small country and we must build upon our achievements to date. I want this building to

be a symbol of our new democracy as we go forward with confidence into the next millennium," he said.

Mr Davies, who plans to reveal financial details of the competing bids next week, said the new building was expected to be ready until May, 2000. The first meeting of the new assembly next May would be held in the council chamber of Cardiff University. Temporary accommodation would then be needed.

Rejecting suggestions that Swansea had been betrayed, Mr Davies said the town had mounted a "magnificent campaign", and had demonstrated the viability of an all-Wales Assembly linked through technology.

Mike Hedges, Swansea's council leader, said the town was disappointed at the outcome, but would try to build on the enthusiasm shown during the campaign to bring the assembly to west Wales. "There are exciting opportunities in Swansea."

chancellor's Kohl

news in brief

Can urged on by SS veterans

Benet police

art lets nuclear

arth to go live on



ent temples in

educati

TheGuard

The chancellor's support is waning inside and outside his party as rival Schröder captures German imagination

Kohl's camp fear his magic has gone

Ian Traynor in Bonn

FELMUT Kohl's future is hostage to his horoscope, the stars are looking distinctly inauspicious, according to one astrologer, has "a hard year ahead".

"He will experience a period of loneliness," Alexander von Ditzembowski predicted. His career prospects are less than bright and his health could be better: "in this condition the election campaign will not bring him much fun."

Although the campaign has barely begun and Mr Kohl is a notoriously tough operator when his back is against the wall, those predictions are already looking pertinent.

Barely a day goes by without our protests from his lieutenants that there is no alternative candidate to Mr Kohl for the general election on September 27. His Christian Democrat number two, Wolfgang Schäuble, has reiterated that he will not run for chancellor, although the public and many in his party wish he would.

Mr Kohl's strength is foreign policy, which will not win votes. The single European currency either turns voters off or fills them with fear. Mr Kohl's strategy to run as the guarantor of the euro is being quietly shelved.

He is being advised to stop strutting the international stage and to focus on widespread fear and insecurity at home, where unemployment nudges a record 5 million.

Since Gerhard Schröder won elections in Lower Saxony two weeks ago and seized the Social Democratic nomination, his bandwagon has picked up speed.

In elections four years ago in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt, the Christian and Social Democrats were neck-and-neck at around 25 per cent. An opinion poll yesterday showed an unprecedented 20-point gap opening up before key elections next month.

The CDU slumped to 25 per cent from 33 in January, while the SPD soared 7 per cent to 45. A national poll on Thursday showed the SPD rising to 45 per cent while the CDU and its sister Christian Social Union in Bavaria slid to 34 per cent.

Leading Bavarian conservatives are suggesting that Mr Kohl is more of a liability than an asset and that he should refrain from campaigning in the southern state, which has an election two weeks before the national poll in September.

The chancellor's friends in the media are complaining of a mood of fatalism in the Kohl camp, and the chorus of different views on how to reverse the slide grows louder daily.

This week Mr Schäuble complained that the election campaign was becoming too personalised and American-style because of the "Schröder effect".

But for the past 15 years, Mr Kohl has personified the CDU and Germany at large, and has ruthlessly sidelined all pretenders to his crown.

Although Mr Schröder is cannily issuing repeated warnings against over-optimism, leading Social Democrats are having trouble wiping the grins off their faces as the CDU resorts to a combination of wheedling and scare tactics.

Mr Kohl will no doubt claw back some of the ground he is losing. But, after routing four different Social Democratic contenders for the chancellorship in the past 15 years, he is facing his most formidable challenger yet. The campaign shows every sign of being a television-driven, highly personalised Kohl-Schröder showdown.

Should next month's Saxony-Anhalt poll produce a big SPD win, the knives may well be unsheathed among CDU grandees. A week after that election, Mr Kohl will enter the history books as the single European currency is decided. Having savoured the moment and realised a long cherished dream, Mr Kohl may be forced to contemplate retirement.

News in brief

Ban urged on march by SS veterans

ORGANISATIONS representing Russian-speakers in the Baltic state of Latvia called on the country's president yesterday to ban a planned march by Latvian veterans of the second world war who were drafted by the Nazis to fight the Soviet army. Former members of the Latvian Waffen SS Legion plan to commemorate their unit's 55th anniversary with a gathering tomorrow and a procession through Riga on Monday.

But four Russian organisations said in an open letter to President Guntis Ulmanis: "This is not compatible with the name of a democratic country as Latvia calls itself." There has been growing tension between Moscow and Latvia over the treatment of ethnic Russians. — *Reuters, Riga*.

JonBenet police change tack

FOURTEEN months after the body of the six-year-old beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey was found in Boulder, Colorado, police investigating the murder have recommended turning the case over to a grand jury.

After a botched first inquiry, police have finished the second examination without making an arrest and have been unable to interview JonBenet's parents, electronics millionaire John Ramsey and his wife Patsy. They have refused to participate in a second inquiry.

The grand jury, which has a similar role to an English committal hearing, could bring charges. — *Christopher Reed, Los Angeles*.

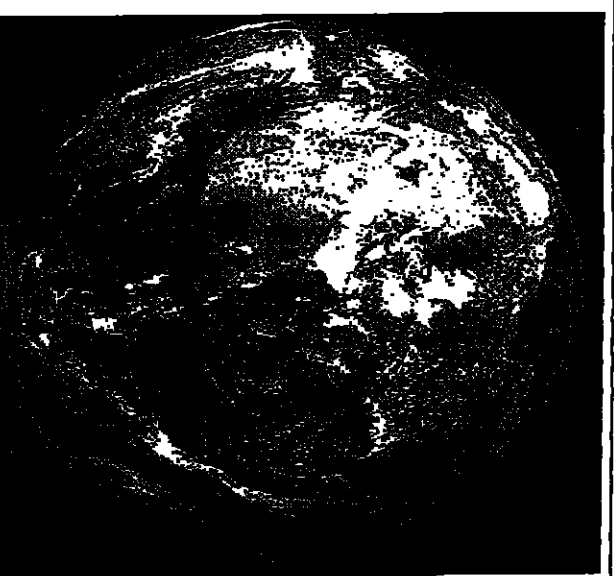
Port lets nuclear ship dock

A BRITISH ship carrying 30 tons of nuclear waste was allowed to dock in northern Japan yesterday after being forced to anchor in international waters while the local governor demanded assurances that a permanent dump site would be found elsewhere.

Morio Kimura changed his mind late on Thursday, saying the Pacific Swan could enter port so its 26 crew could escape rough seas.

But after a meeting with the prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, yesterday, Mr Kimura also gave the go-ahead for the ship to unload its cargo. "I am very satisfied," he said after the meeting. Mr Hashimoto promised to work closely with the local government in the future. — *AP, Tokyo*.

Earth to go live on Internet



The United States vice-president, Al Gore, yesterday unveiled a continuous live image of the Earth spinning on its axis in deep space. Mr Gore wants Internet users and television networks to have permanent access to a live video picture of the Earth from cameras mounted on an orbiting satellite spacecraft. He plans to have the project on-line by 2000, the year in which he is hoping to be elected president. — *Martin Kettle, Washington*.

Ancient temples in peril

CAMBODIA'S ancient and fragile Angkor temples have been made vulnerable to the elements by land speculators and local villagers who have cleared large swaths of forest in the protected area, a government report warned yesterday.

The Phnom Penh Post quoted Chay Samnith, a senior official at the environment ministry, as saying up to 2,470 acres had been cleared, covering about a tenth of the protected zone's land area. The clearance — which reaches almost to the walls of Angkor Wat, the most famous temple — is depriving the temples of a windbreak, Mr Samnith said. — *AP, Phnom Penh*.

education

Every Tuesday in the

The Guardian



Former Communist hopefuls add a dash of colour

THE ex-Communists of former East Germany yesterday sought to boost their chances in September's German general elections by unveiling a mixed bag of candidates, writes Ian Traynor.

The leader of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)

in the Bonn parliament, Gregor Gysi, a former East German human rights lawyer, bestowed a nomination on the pierced punk Angela Marquardt (both pictured above), while the party put up a former West German spy chief for a crucial central Berlin constituency.

Retired admiral Einar Schmallegger, the former head of West German military intelligence, is to run for the central Berlin borough of Mitte, site of the Reichstag, chancellery and government apparatus when the seat of power moves to Berlin next year.

Gustav Schur, a former cycling star, is also running for the former Communists, who hope to win at least three direct mandates in east Berlin and thus bypass the need to clear 5 per cent of the overall national vote to qualify for representation in parliament.

Brecht relative in Hitler CD row

Dennis Staunton in Berlin

BERTOLT BRECHT'S son-in-law is at the centre of a row involving a CD recording of Mein Kampf which has been condemned by the leader of Germany's Jewish community as offering encouragement to neo-Nazis.

The veteran German actor Ekkehard Schall, who is married to Brecht's daughter, Barbara Brecht-Schall, has recorded excerpts from Hitler's book to music and with sound effects but no critical commentary on the sentiments of the text.

The Jewish leader Ignatz Bubis has called on Mr Schall to withdraw the double CD, saying Mein Kampf should be available only for academic study.

"This is just grist to the mill of today's extreme rightwingers," he said. "Mein Kampf is banned in Germany but the Bavarian government, which controls the rights, granted permission to the leftwing Eulenspiegel publishing house to produce the CD."

Matthias Oehme of Eulenspiegel insists that Mr Bubis has misunderstood the nature of the project, which Mr Oehme describes as an exercise in anti-fascist enlightenment. "I think he is right to want to prevent the unconditionally spread of extreme rightwing thinking. But what is happening here is exactly the opposite. This is an intelligent form of anti-fascism and an aggressive form of satire," he said.

He claims the reading exposes the banality of Hitler's thinking.

The leftwing credentials of Mr Schall, for years the leading interpreter of the principal Brecht roles at the Berliner Ensemble, are beyond doubt. But the irony of his approach may prove too subtle for many.

Sound effects such as marching feet, a barrel organ and a roaring lion help to relieve the tedium of the dictator's self-justification but they offer no political commentary.

Mr Oehme said: "I absolutely reject the idea that an extreme rightwinger would buy this to give himself a thrill. If he did, he certainly wouldn't enjoy it. He'd probably come round here and kill us."

Britain cooks up Cyprus fudge

Martin Walker in Edinburgh

BRITAIN was last night preparing a fudge on the suddenly critical issue of Cyprus joining the European Union. A direct clash between Greece and France on the controversy has threatened to bring together the Rhineland and mark Britain's EU presidency with a disaster.

The Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, will try to hammer out a deal at a working breakfast of the EU's 15 foreign ministers this morning.

There will be three texts on Cyprus's accession to the EU at the breakfast. The French version requires that EU nations have the right to freeze accession negotiations once they have started until the impasse between Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities has been solved.

French officials point out that a divided Cyprus in the EU would mean that any border clashes between Greeks and Turks would be an EU problem, requiring EU peacekeepers and presenting the Union with a security challenge its institutions cannot currently handle.

The Greek version insists the Cyprus accession process is a done deal agreed in Luxembourg, and what remains is to discuss the money — "the amount of pre-accession aid for agriculture and structural development".

The British compromise would accept the offer of Cyprus's president, Glafkos Clerides, to give Turkish Cypriots "a full place in a Cypriot delegation" as a sufficient breakthrough to justify accession talks going ahead as planned on March 31.

Mr Cook is clutching at the phrase "Cypriot delegation", rather than "delegation of the Cyprus republic" — which the Turkish Cypriots do not recognise — as a breakthrough.

Mr Cook is also using the French position — and discreet American pressure on Athens — as levers to persuade the Greek government to lift its blockade of £250 million in EU funds for Turkey.

Money contractually owed under EU-Turkish customs agreements.

If the Cook plan works, or clears the blockage, it will buy time for US and EU pressure to speed up separate talks for a Cyprus settlement based on a long-standing plan drawn up by the United Nations.

The Cook strategy rests heavily on his relationship with the US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and the pressure she can put on Greece and Turkey.

● Greek Cypriot troops opened fire on a Turkish military position along the green line dividing Cyprus yesterday, according to the Turkish Cypriot news agency, TAK. It said bullets fired by the Greek Cypriot National Guard hit the position but no one was hurt. United Nations peacekeepers were called to the scene.

French left set to win regions

Paul Webster in Lyon

A BELATED attempt to cover up harmful splits in the local Gaullist-centrist coalition is unlikely to stop the Rhône-Alpes region becoming one of the most spectacular leftwing gains in tomorrow's regional elections.

The Gaullist-RPR leader, Philippe Séguin added Lyon to his schedule of 75 meetings to bring together the Rhône-Alpes chairman and former defence minister, Charles Millon, and the mayor of Lyon and former prime minister, Raymond Barre.

But continuing coolness between Mr Millon and Mr Barre reflected national rightwing divisions that could contribute to the loss of most of the 20 regional assemblies controlled by conservatives since 1992.

Only two assemblies — part of a devolutionary network with a total budget of £7.5 billion — are run by the left. Socialists should keep the poor rural area of Limousin, while the Greens, part of the national coalition, are unlikely to lose the industrialised Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

Socialists and Communists will probably seize a further 15 assemblies from Gaullists and centrists, and could take over France's most prosperous region, the Ile de France based on Paris.

The full impact of the poll will not become clear until councils choose their chairmen on Friday, after behind-the-scenes deals in which the extreme rightwing National Front will arbitrate, notably in the Marseille-based Provence and Alpes Maritime assembly.

In most cases, the Socialist

led coalition is expected to benefit from the popularity of Lionel Jospin's nine-month-old government, which hopes to use the regional result as a mandate to speed up national reforms.

The Rhône-Alpes region, with 5 million voters, illustrates disarray in Gaullist and Union of French Democracy ranks after the general election rout last year, and hesitation about alliances with the National Front.

Mr Millon's refusal to ally with Jean-Marie Le Pen's extremists has paralysed the regional spending programme and slowed down plans to develop one of the biggest European cross-border industrial bases in a link-up with northern Italy.

Mr Séguin, who took over the Gaullist-RPR after the June election defeat and then tried unsuccessfully to break with traditions set by President Jacques Chirac, campaigned for Mr Millon at a rally but looked even more vulnerable than the regional assembly president.

Mr Séguin, who heard Mr Millon tell rightwing voters not to give into "black pessimism", warned voters in Lyon against handing over more power structures to Socialists, who are also expected to win many *départements*, or country councils, in polling tomorrow and next Sunday.

In turn, Mr Jospin has sharply criticised the RPR leader at two public meetings, describing Mr Séguin as violent and incoherent.

Mr Séguin has mocked the cabinet, accusing the prime minister of assuming a false piety to cover up scandals in previous Socialist cabinets.

Israel decries 'provocative' visit with aide Cook defiant over tour of Har Homa Jewish settlement

David Sharrock in Jerusalem

THE Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, is to ignore Israeli objections and go ahead with a visit to the controversial Jewish settlement of Har Homa during his visit to Jerusalem next week, the Foreign Office said last night.

Israel had asked Mr Cook to cancel the visit after it was announced that he would be accompanied by Faisal Husseini, the Palestinian Authority's chief official for Jerusalem affairs.

One official called the visit to Har Homa — known as Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arabic — on the edge of Arab East Jerusalem a "provocative act".

"The visit to Har Homa would not have positive implications on this visit," another Israeli official said.

Israel does not recognise Palestinian claims to Jerusalem, which it regards as its "eternal and united" capital, and insists it has the right to build anywhere within its borders.

Mr Cook wants to visit Har Homa because he believes it is one of the key blocks to progress in the Middle East peace process. He will carry with him a six-point initiative, which includes a call to halt all settlement expansion, to breathe life into the talks.

Jewish immigrants from affluent countries are already being targeted in a "build your own home" campaign to prevent Arabs from settling on land in the Negev, Galilee and along the Green Line.

The Israel Land Authority and the Jewish Agency will make 1,200 plots available for residential construction in areas which officials fear could be taken over by a "non-Jewish" population.

Infrastructure work at Har Homa was completed late last year. The prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is under

pressure from rightwingers in his coalition to start work on building homes there.

There has been no progress in the peace negotiations since March last year, when work began at Har Homa. A British diplomat said yesterday: "Our policy on settlements is very clear — anywhere beyond the Green Line they are illegal."

The Green Line is the border between Israel and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which existed until the 1967 Six Day War when Israeli forces seized the territory.

On the same day as the visit, and after touring the site of Gaza's planned port

The location and timing of the bomb show the settlers were behind it

pressure from rightwingers in his coalition to start work on building homes there.

There has been no progress in the peace negotiations since March last year, when work began at Har Homa. A British diplomat said yesterday: "Our policy on settlements is very clear — anywhere beyond the Green Line they are illegal."

The Green Line is the border between Israel and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which existed until the 1967 Six Day War when Israeli forces seized the territory.

On the same day as the visit, and after touring the site of Gaza's planned port

with the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat, Mr Cook is due to meet Mr Netanyahu for talks.

The Foreign Secretary is on a four-day tour of the Middle East in Britain's capacity as holder of the European Union's rotating presidency.

Meanwhile, a small bomb exploded on Damascus Road near Jerusalem's Old City, wounding four Palestinians.

It came amid rising tensions, after the killing of three Palestinian workers by Israeli troops at a Hebron checkpoint on Tuesday night.

The city's Israeli police commander, Yair Yitzhaki, said it was unclear whether Palestinian or Jewish extremists were responsible.

But Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, secretary-general of the Palestinian cabinet, said: "The timing of the bomb and the place reveals the party standing behind it — which is the settlers."

"They have done it to give a justification to their army to carry out security procedures to obstruct the Friday prayer."

Damascus Road is always thronged on Friday mornings with worshippers heading to the al-Aqsa mosque, Islam's third holiest shrine.

In a sign that the Palestinian Authority is anxious to quell protests, its security forces fired tear gas at about 3,000 demonstrators advancing on Israeli troops in the West Bank city of Nablus.

Fugitive lovers seek asylum

Richard Galpin
in Islamabad

KANWAR AHSAN, the man shot and critically wounded 10 days ago in Karachi after secretly marrying a Pathan woman without her parents' consent, has appealed to members of the international community to grant the couple asylum.

Speaking from his hospital bed he said he and his wife would never be safe from her family if they remained in Pakistan. "I want to leave the country immediately. We are both living in fear of our lives. They've already tried to kill me and they'll definitely try and kill my wife. I'm very worried about her security."

At least 30 armed policemen are guarding the hospital. But even with this level of protection he says he does not feel completely safe. His wife is in hiding.

Mr Ahsan's secret marriage to Riffat Afridi last month sparked a storm of controversy in Pakistan, where arranged marriages are the norm. It was particularly controversial as the couple are from different ethnic backgrounds.

Members of the traditionally conservative Pathan community at first accused him of kidnapping her. But she testified before a court that she had married of her own free will.

The country was transfixed by the love affair even before the attack on Mr Ahsan on the steps of a court building. Police arrested 12 people at the scene, including his wife's father and brother.

Although doctors have been unable to remove one of the bullets from his body, they say Mr Ahsan is making a good recovery. Fears that he would be paralysed have also diminished.

"I don't regret anything. We were determined to get married and are very happy to have done it. We always knew something might happen afterwards, but we didn't think it would be this serious," he said.

According to his brother, Captain Asad Sarfaraz, other members of the family have also received death threats from the Pathan community in Karachi.



Muslim women help Imelda Marcos, the former Philippines First Lady, don a veil at a mosque in Manila yesterday, where she was campaigning for the May 11 presidential election. PHOTOGRAPH BY DE CASTRO

Lawyers use publish-and-be-damned strategy

Paula Jones turns up heat on Clinton

Martin Kettle in Washington

LAWYERS for Paula Jones last night shot the credibility of her controversial sexual harassment suit against Bill Clinton on a last-ditch, high-profile attempt to rebut the president's claims that the abuse against him should be thrown out.

Defying a much-abused judicial gagging order in the case, Ms Jones's lawyers published much of the evidence they have assembled against Mr Clinton. They also held a press briefing in Washington to accompany the submission of their formal counter-argument against moves by the president's lawyers to have the case thrown out.

Meanwhile, a crucial witness against Mr Clinton in the Jones case said she would appear on television tomorrow to answer questions about allegations that he groped and fondled her in the White House in 1993.

The move by Kathleen Willey is seen as further evidence that Mr Clinton's accusers are using a publish-and-be-damned media strategy to prevent the Jones case being dismissed for lack of evidence by an Arkansas judge next week.

Yesterday Ms Jones's lawyers also filed an official counter-argument in Little Rock against Mr Clinton's motion last month for Judge Susan Webber Wright to dismiss the case. Mr Clinton's lawyers say Ms Jones has failed to prove her allegations that Mr Clinton asked her for

oral sex when he was governor of Arkansas in 1991 and that she suffered job discrimination as a result of her alleged refusal.

They are asking for the judge to deliver a "summary judgment" against Ms Jones which would prevent the case coming to trial. The process of choosing a jury in the Jones case is scheduled to begin on May 27.

Ms Jones's lawyers yesterday presented Judge Webber Wright with several hundred

pages of argument and evidence, while other members of her legal team arrived in Washington to brief the national media.

The twin-track legal and media strategy appeared to be a high-stakes defensive move to stem a tide of public opinion which has become increasingly sympathetic to Mr Clinton in recent weeks.

Judge Webber Wright is expected to make her ruling in a week's time. The papers revealed by the Jones team yesterday were expected to include large sections of the transcript of Mr Clinton's supposedly private deposition on the case, given

on January 17, versions of which have already appeared in the press in the form of anonymous leaks.

The lawyers also published details of allegations from other women which, they said, amounted to a pattern of sexual harassment by Mr Clinton which would support Ms Jones's claims.

Before the documents were released last night, one of Ms Jones's lawyers, John Whitehead of the rightwing Rutherford Institute, said: "It will be fun to read."

It is increasingly clear that Ms Willey is seen by the Jones team as a vital witness in their favour. Ms Willey, who is also co-operating with Kenneth Starr, the independent prosecutor in the separate Monica Lewinsky investigation, was a former White House volunteer who is believed to have given evidence that Mr Clinton put his hand on her breast and her hand on his groin during an encounter in the White House Oval Office in 1993.

"We think she'll be a good witness at trial," Mr Whitehead said of Ms Willey yesterday.

Among the other papers given to Judge Webber Wright yesterday were portions of affidavits and depositions given by other women who the Jones team believes will support their case. Although the identity of these women is also supposedly covered by the judge's gag order, they include Ms Lewinsky and Jennifer Flowers, with whom Mr Clinton is said to have admitted a single sexual encounter in 1997.

Swiss say evidence links Salinas brother to drug money

Martin Kettle in Washington

SWISS investigators believe they have firm evidence that Raul Salinas, the jailed brother of the former Mexican president Carlos Salinas, made tens of millions of dollars as a crucial intermediary for Colombian drug-trafficking cartels in the early 1990s.

A report in the Wall Street Journal yesterday says the Swiss team, which froze \$20 million (£7.5 million) in Swiss bank accounts controlled by Raul Salinas at the

start of the investigation in 1995, have obtained sworn evidence from United States drug agents and Mexican and Colombian traffickers and financiers which reveals a multi-million dollar network of links between the drug cartels and Mexican politicians, with Mr Salinas at its centre.

Mr Salinas is in prison in Mexico for conspiring to murder a political opponent and still faces possible charges of "illegitimate enrichment".

He has always denied that his wealth comes from the drug trade, but one witness told investigators that the Colombian cartels paid \$80 million to Mexican politicians between 1990 and 1993 and that half the money went directly to Mr Salinas.

The witness, Guillermo Pallomari, was chief personal adviser to Miguel Rodriguez, one of the four Cali cartel chiefs, from 1990 to 1994, before turning himself over to the authorities. Mr Pallomari says that Mr Salinas was paid directly by Amado Carillo Fuentes, who was then the head of Mexico's largest cocaine network. He has provided investigators with documents supporting his allegations.

Mr Pallomari says that Mr Salinas received money, watches, paintings and jewels in return for facilitating drug flights into and out of Mexico and arranging for the return of drug hauls seized by the authorities. According to Mr Pallomari, Mr Salinas was known by the cartel as *chupa suero* — the bloodsucker.

On one occasion, investigators have been told, Mr Salinas arranged for the return of 3,000kg of cocaine to the Cali cartel after 5,000kg had been seized by Mexican drug enforcement authorities in Acapulco.

Mr Salinas continues to claim that his fortune consisted of money given to him by others for investment. But the Swiss investigators are said to have obtained detailed ledgers from the cartels which record payments to Mr Salinas and other politicians and officials.

Mexico has indicated that it is unlikely to agree to the extradition of Mr Salinas to stand trial in any other country, but a spokesman for the attorney-general, Jorge Madrazo, said yesterday that his office would like to work with the Swiss authorities

once the investigations there had been completed.

The evidence does not directly implicate Carlos Salinas, Mexico's president between 1988 and 1995. He left the country after his brother was charged with involvement in the assassination of a leading political opponent, Luis Donaldo Colosio, Carlos, who has lived in Dublin for much of the time since then, says he did not know about his brother's activities.

However, some of the witnesses have told the investigators that the Colombian cartels thought that their pay-

ments to Raul Salinas were a way to buy influence with the president.

As well as the Swiss inquiries into Raul Salinas's financial affairs, other investigations have been taking place in the US, Mexico, France and Britain.

As well as the cartel in Cali, Mr Salinas has been linked to two others — one of them Colombian, the other Mexican. Part of the investigation also centres on how Mr Salinas was able to transfer millions of dollars into Swiss accounts from a Citibank private account based in Mexico.

Illness forces Yeltsin to drop all engagements

James Meek in Moscow

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin cancelled all engagements and vanished to one of his country residences yesterday with what officials variously called a sore throat, flu and a severe respiratory infection.

As financial markets worldwide dipped at the news, Mr Yeltsin's press spokesman, Sergei Yastrebinsky, said the 67-year-old Russian leader might still take part in next week's meeting of leaders of former Soviet countries.

The president's latest bout of sickness came three days after he boasted of his good health to journalists at the Kremlin.

"The subject of the president's health should be closed. This subject does not exist," he said, challenging

them to test his fitness. "I'll meet you in the pool, on the tennis court, on the running track. Come on."

Soon after he began coughing and on Wednesday he apologised at the beginning of a speech for being hoarse.

Mr Yeltsin has retreated for a course of antibiotics to the presidential estate at Gorky-9, outside Moscow, a few minutes' drive away from important medical centres such as the Barvikha sanatorium and the Central Clinical Hospital.

Nominally, he is still in charge. According to the constitution, the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, who according to the constitution would take over as caretaker head of state if the president became incapacitated or died. He is in the United States, leaving his unopposed liberal deputy, Anatoly Chubais, running the government.

The Kremlin press service said the president was suffering from a respiratory infection which had caused him to lose his voice. The presidential chief of staff, Valentin Yumashev, told a meeting of television executives that his boss had a cold.

In 1998, after a series of heart attacks, Mr Yeltsin had multiple heart bypass surgery. There is no evidence that he has suffered heart trouble since, but he has been off sick for long periods, most recently in December.

Even when apparently well, the president has not always kept a firm grip on policy, and has sometimes behaved oddly.

The political and business establishment values him less as an energetic exponent of a reform agenda than as a token of a stagnant form of stability.

Kosovars shout for their leader but Ibrahim Rugova does not come

'We have a leadership crisis. Everything is concentrated on him. It all depends on what he feels and what he does'



An ethnic Albanian leaves his village in Kosovo yesterday. Police attacked it last week.

THEY chanted, "Rugova, Rugova", as they pressed together on the muddy hillside and cobbled streets below. But Ibrahim Rugova, unrecognised president of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population, did not come.

Tens of thousands of young people were holding their first demonstration since Serbian police attacked villages a few miles to the west, killing at least 80 people, many of them women and children.

They waved banners denouncing "Serb terror" and calling for "Peace and Freedom in Kosovo". When it became clear the star attraction would not appear, they dispersed. Serbian police did not intervene.

Jehona Xhaferi, a young office worker, tried to hide her disappointment. "Why should there be speeches? We know what we are here," she said.

Earlier, Mr Rugova, head of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), the largest Albanian political party in the Serb-dominated province, had played an equally quixotic game with the international media.

In response to his invitation to a press conference, about 100 journalists and cameramen crammed a room at the International Press, Essays and Novelists (PEN) centre only to hear a two-minute statement followed by three almost monosyllabic answers to questions. He then left.

"We have a leadership crisis," said Shkëzen Maliqi, a local journalist. "Everything in the LDK is concentrated on Rugova. It all depends on what he feels and does."

Mr Rugova, elected president five years ago in an election Serbia did not recognise, has led a long struggle for

peaceful change. But his almost Gandhian opposition to violence and constant repetition of the slogan "Independence" without outlining a strategy to achieve it are causing disillusionment — and thoughts of armed struggle. "Seven years of waiting, and where has it got us?" Ms Xhaferi said.

Mr Rugova is in a quandary, which might explain his behaviour. Serbia's offer of talks without preconditions put the ethnic Albanians on the diplomatic defensive.

Mr Rugova's spokespeople said they could not accept the invitation to talks because they had learned of it from Serb television not the government, so it must be a propaganda ploy. The invitation referred to the Albanians as a "minority" without conceding that they form 90 per cent of Kosovo's population and want political recognition. It also implied a solution had to be found within the present constitution, which almost all ethnic Albanians reject.

Yet ethnic Albanians cannot deny that the Serbian government and its wily leader, President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia, have shown some flexibility in calling for talks, even if it is only a response to the threat of sanctions from the Contact Group.

But the Contact Group, the United States, Russia, Britain, France, Germany and Italy — is not fully behind Mr Rugova either. Robert Gelbard, a US special envoy, saw Mr Rugova in Kosovo this week, and told him "the US does not feel independence is the answer". He added Kosovo's leaders had also to be willing to engage in "unconditional dialogue".

The US sees a solution short of full independence. It wants "some form of enhanced status for Kosovo, with significantly greater self-administration".

Mr Rugova must work out what that might be, and what concessions he can make before talks with the Serbs. It is a hard road which, on yesterday's evidence, he still wants to ponder in silence.

not deny that the Serbian government and its wily leader, President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia, have shown some flexibility in calling for talks, even if it is only a response to the threat of sanctions from the Contact Group.

But the Contact Group, the United States, Russia, Britain, France, Germany and Italy — is not fully behind Mr Rugova either. Robert Gelbard, a US special envoy, saw Mr Rugova in Kosovo this week, and told him "the US does not feel independence is the answer". He added Kosovo's leaders had also to be willing to engage in "unconditional dialogue".

The US sees a solution short of full independence. It wants "some form of enhanced status for Kosovo, with significantly greater self-administration".

Mr Rugova must work out what that might be, and what concessions he can make before talks with the Serbs. It is a hard road which, on yesterday's evidence, he still wants to ponder in silence.

Armenians seek 'saviour'

Monday's poll turns on the issue of the Azeri blockade. Tom Whitehouse in Yerevan reports

AMEGAPHONE boomed the manifesto promises of Karen Demircchyan, former Armenian Communist Party boss and presidential hopeful, across the square to a cafe where two young war veterans were eating lunch.

While 3,000 unemployed factory workers in Razdan, an industrial graveyard 30 miles from Yerevan, were certain to applaud his pledge to put Armenia back to work, the soldiers were unimpressed.

"He is just talking," one said. "I lost my brother and friends in the battle to recover Nagorno-Karabakh. What I want is a president who will not sell it back to Azerbaijan."

Few Armenians disagree, but most now take for granted control over Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia's mountainous ethnic enclave inside Azerbai-

jan's internationally recognised borders. The main issue of Monday's election is not war, but the need to alleviate the problems that followed military victory.

The reconquest of Nagorno-Karabakh in 1994 cleared the Azerbaijani army and people from the area, but Azerbaijan and its ally Turkey retaliated by closing their borders with Armenia. Ensuing energy shortages brought the country to its knees.

Nearly half the population is unemployed and, 10 years after the devastating earthquake in the north, thousands of people are still homeless.

Mr Demircchyan did not mention the war. Asked if he would compromise on Karabakh to lift the blockade, he said: "I believe the Armenian people are hard-working and will achieve their goals."

Such vagueness got him sacked 10 years ago when Mikhail Gorbachev decided he was too conservative and unimaginative. Those faults are now his main selling points.

"He says nothing, but that is exactly what Armenians want to hear," said a Yerevan journalist, David Petrosyan.

"Unfortunately, people are waiting for a saviour," said Robert Kocharyan, acting president and Mr Demircchyan's main rival.

Many see Mr Demircchyan, aged 65, as a fresh face untainted by the difficulties of the past 10 years, while Mr Kocharyan, aged 43, who was president of Nagorno-Karabakh until his appointment as prime minister last year, seems a has-been.

The election was prompted by an agreement by his predecessor, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, to an international peace plan under which Armenian troops would withdraw from their "buffer zone" around Karabakh before a final settlement.

His parliamentary supporters rebelled, forcing him to resign. Mr Ter-Petrosyan's championing of the Karabakh cause in 1988 swept him to power after the Soviet Union collapsed and Armenia won independence.

Then nationalist forces turned against him when he backed compromise.

Their champion is now Mr Kocharyan, whose strong support from the nationalists has prompted fears that the polls might be rigged.

Ethnicity divides Mother Russia from sisters

Private view

James Meek

IT'S GOOD to see Russian bigwigs like the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, showing a brief puff of indignation, however synthetic, at the fate of Russians living in the Baltic states.

Moscow's pragmatists should long ago have tried to outflank the ranks of Great Russia chauvinists by mounting a calm, reasoned campaign to get the West to put pressure on Latvia and Estonia over their undemocratic treatment of Russian minorities.

Better still would be to see the Russian government taking more interest in the mass violation of the civil rights of Russians in Russia.

Moscow's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, is famed for his concern at the plight of ethnic Russians in former Soviet states.

So can he be the man who gives the Moscow police free rein to abuse and arrest traders from the Caucasus, including Russian citizens, when they come to the city? Can this be the Mr Luzhkov who has ignored a constitutional court order to abolish the registration permits which prevent Russians from outside Moscow moving to the city?

It can. And Mr Luzhkov is not unusual. Russian citizens who are not ethnic Russians suffer discrimination in ethnic Russian areas. Travellers from the Russian region of Dagestan complain they are processed like foreigners when they arrive at Moscow's airports.

These violations have their mirror image in autonomous regions. In Tatarstan, where the number of ethnic Rus-

sians and ethnic Tatars is about equal, there are few Russians in the administration. In the Tatar capital Kazan, the local council approved a measure to pay employees an extra 15 per cent if they spoke Tatar.

It is not that Tatarstan, or Moscow, want to break from the Russian Federation. Rather the local elites want to enjoy all the advantages of living in a large, potentially powerful country — without the constitutional responsibilities.

Mainstream federal rulers turn their backs on these problems, afraid that if they attack Mr Luzhkov's treatment of non-Muscovites, they will be seen as being infected by an alien Western notion of human rights. If they attack Tatarstan's alienation of ethnic Russians, they will be accused of imperialism.

The result: a clear field for the worst racist, populist pro-

pagandists to exploit the grievances of ethnic Russians in non-ethnic Russian areas for their own twisted ends.

Another result was the Chechen disaster. Ethnic Chechens did want independence. In 1991-92 Mr Yeltsin pulled out Russian security forces and did nothing for three years while ethnic Russians were harassed by Chechens. Then in late 1994, just when many ethnic Russians had found those who remained with the Chechens, the president sent his incompetent army on a blundering pacification effort which, in the name of protecting Russian citizens — both Chechens and ethnic Russian — left tens of thousands dead. What was learned? Astonishingly little.

Inter-Russian discrimination is broader than ethnic discrimination. The Russian state and the Russian individ-

ual are awkward strangers. The country's leaders can still only deal with Russians either as people with whom they are personally acquainted with or as faceless masses.

As the liberal Russian journalist Otto Latsis said last week, wrong and short-sighted as Latvia's treatment of its Russian minority is, it is hard to reconcile Moscow's indignation at the treatment of the Russians in Riga with its lack of concern for the Russian-speaking migrants from former Soviet republics who have come to Russia.

Between three-quarters and four-fifths have been refused the status of refugees or forced migrants, depriving them of basic civil rights.

"It is as if Moscow and Riga are competing to reject those who have become outcasts through no fault of their own," Mr Latsis said.

Manuel Piñero

Hero
revol

F

Janie Rysanek

A queen

Jones turns
out on Clinton

Manuel Piñero

Hero of the revolution

FEW people played such a significant role in the foreign activities of the Cuban revolution as Manuel Piñero Losada, who has died in a car crash, aged 64. "Barbaroja" (or "Red Beard"), as he was universally known, set up the Cuban security apparatus in the early years of the revolution, and had special responsibilities for revolutionary developments in Latin America for more than 30 years. For much of that period, Piñero, after Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl, was the most influential figure in the Cuban regime.

He orchestrated Che Guevara's guerrilla activities in Bolivia in 1966-67, as well as earlier campaigns in Argentina and the Congo. In the 1980s, he was the mastermind co-ordinating revolutionary movements in Central America and the Caribbean. He helped the Sandinistas seize power in Nicaragua, and was the man responsible for Cuban relations with the guerrilla movements in El Salvador and Guatemala, as well as with the left-wing regime of Maurice Bishop in Grenada.

Piñero was born in the provincial Cuban town of Matanzas, the son of Spanish immigrants from Galicia. His father was the local representative of Batista's army. Just before his birth, according to a popular legend, there was a hurricane, the midwife arrived late, and Piñero was born on the counter of his parents' bar. He was sent to

New York to be taught business studies at Columbia University and there married Lorna Burdall, an American ballet dancer. In 1959, he returned home and, like many young professionals, joined Castro's guerrilla army, teaming up with Raúl Castro. He became military chief of Oriente province in 1959. Later, with Ramiro Valdés, he helped to organise G2, the new state security system.

Through the early years of the revolution, Piñero's official title was deputy minister of the interior. After the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961, he was put in charge of Liberación, a department within the ministry, whose task was to help promote revolutionary movements throughout the American empire in Latin America. As such, he was the organising brain behind Guevara's various revolutionary interventions in the 1960s, and the must share some of the blame for the logistical disaster of the Bolivian expedition of 1967, which ended in Guevara's capture and death.

PIÑERO was also responsible for infiltration into the Cuban exile organisations in Miami and was even charged with keeping an eye on Soviet personnel in Cuba. According to the report, the Russians once asked for him to be arrested.

Although he appears to have been a supporter, with Raúl Castro and Che Guevara, of a radical pro-Soviet

line in the early years, he was no Stalinist. The strategy of promoting guerrilla revolution in Latin America, which evolved after the missile crisis of 1962, was partially designed to free Cuba of undue dependence on the Soviet Union. Men like Guevara and Piñero, and indeed Castro himself, believed that Khrushchev had seriously let them down by withdrawing his Soviet missiles from Cuba. So Piñero's guerrilla operations were undertaken independently from the Soviet Union, although, like Castro, he was a man capable of listening to, and befriending, both the orthodox communists of Latin America and the radical revolutionaries to their left.

Some writers have claimed that Piñero's secret police came eventually to have such a grip over Cuban society that it became one of the chief props that enabled the Cuban regime to survive for so long. Notably in the difficult economic situation following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Yet, according to the Mexican political scientist Jorge Castañeda, "this was done without resort to indiscriminate, bloody repression". It was achieved "by the application of selective and mostly bloodless, though nonetheless brutal, security measures... Soviet involvement in this area was kept to a minimum".

After the military coup in Chile in 1973, and the death of Salvador Allende, Fidel Castro began to downplay the possibilities of revolutionary



Brothers in arms... Piñero with a portrait of his friend and comrade, Che Guevara

change in Latin America. Piñero's operations were moved from the Ministry of the Interior, and he had fewer troops at his command. From then on, he was to run the "Americas department" of the central committee of the Cuban Communist Party. He was an active go-between with Latin America's revolutionary left, but no longer had the resources to fund and organise guerrilla war. Castro's chief foreign interests in the following decade were in Angola and Ethiopia, in which Piñero played no role.

He continued, however, to find ways to assist insurrectionary movements in Latin America independently of the Soviet Union and, to some extent, of the Cuban state. In 1977, when the Argentine war guerrilla movement, the Montoneros, was politically in decline (but immensely rich as a result of successful kidnapping operations), he persuaded them to use their ill-gotten gains to help finance the burgeoning Sandinista movement in Nicaragua,

which eventually seized power in 1979. After the Sandinista victory, Piñero returned to favour in Cuba. Although the Cubans could never match the American supply of weapons to fuel the Contra war in Nicaragua, Piñero supplied a constant stream of prudent and cautious advice, both to the Sandinistas in power and to other revolutionary groups, which remained far from power, in central America.

His contacts with them, and his knowledge of their divisions and weaknesses, made him a key player in the unfolding drama of each individual country. After the total defeat of the Sandinistas in 1990, Piñero's fortunes changed yet again. He lost his position as head of the Americas department of the central committee in March 1992 — an indication, perhaps, that the export of revolution was finally off the Cuban agenda.

Piñero was a man of leg-

endary charm, a bon vivant, and a brilliant raconteur with a fund of endless jokes. While living in Chile during the Allende era, he met and married a Chilean writer, Marta Harnacker, a famous Marxist theoretician in her own right, and a best-selling author. They had two children.

He had a vast and influential circle of friends on the Latin American left, but was tight-tongued about his operations, as befitted a secret police chief. Many historians and biographers who bear a track to his door were fobbed off with the suggestion that Barbaroja would himself be writing his memoirs. Yet, unless there is a manuscript hidden away somewhere, he is not now likely to get his own version of a crucial period in the history of Latin America.

Richard Gott
Manuel Piñero Losada, revolutionary, born March 14, 1933; died March 12, 1998

OBITUARIES 7

Face to Faith

The road to God is paved with disagreement

Ian Markham

THERE is no doubt that evangelicals, with their high view of biblical authority, studying theology at degree level 20 years ago felt uncomfortable. *The Myth of God Incarnate* had just appeared: in it seven distinguished theologians explained why people in the modern world would find it difficult to accept the traditional doctrine of the incarnation, the belief that God became human in Jesus Christ. If the incarnation was in trouble, then there was no way that such academic theologians were going to be sympathetic to a Bible "without error". Evangelicals often found university an unfriendly and difficult place to be.

The problems facing the evangelicals were all part of the much talked about gap between "pulpit" and "pew". In the 1970s, all those who were theologically educated were sensitive to the problems surrounding such fundamental doctrines as the virgin birth or the resurrection of Jesus. They all appreciated that it was difficult to use the Bible as an authority in a literal way.

Meanwhile, the believer in the "pew" very often continued to operate without any awareness of these complexities. A major problem, then, was the extent to which those clergy could let on to an ignorant laity the extent of their "unbelief".

how such certainty is justified or how such commitment can lead to such cruelty to those outside. They arrive at university tolerant and interested. These students find the current trends in academic theology very odd. For some contemporary teachers of theology in our distinguished secular universities, theology is a pursuit for those inside the Church. Entire weeks of a "systematic theology" course can be devoted to the value of a "unitarian" world view, without any defence of the basic coherence or plausibility of the doctrine. All the questions and issues that bothered our student on arrival become peripheral; for these students, the whole experience of academic theology works with an agenda that is unrecognisable. In the modern world, university departments of theology and religious studies, funded by the taxpayer, should be committed to openness and diversity — for educational, social and theological reasons. Educationally, there needs to be creative conversation between people of different attitudes and approaches, traditionalists, liberals and sceptics. This would offer the chance of intellectual growth. Theologically, it would be true

Today the trends are robustly conservative

to fundamental truths about the nature of God and God's creation. The relevant truths are as follows: first, however strong one's belief that God has revealed essential matters about the divine, no one seriously denies that he is "other" — beyond our comprehension and ineffable. In that context, there is no room for dogmatism. Secondly, we may feel that there is even design on the part of God in this relative uncertainty. Certainly, it makes for a sense of awe before God in worship and lies at the heart of the mystical traditions. And it recognises the facts of human life in the world's manifold societies.

There are many cultures which have given birth to different faiths. It looks as if God values diversity and disagreement. God seems to want a world where we have to work out for ourselves the truth about God's creation. Humility, listening, and learning are not compromises from the Christian gospel, but activities true to its very heart. When theologians decide that they do not need others who disagree, then they are in a state of sin. It is a denial of the creator, who has done everything possible to make such an attitude a complete impossibility.

Ian Markham is professor of theology and public life at Liverpool Hope University College

Leonie Rysanek

A queen for Wagner's gods

LEONIE Rysanek, who has died aged 71, was one of the century's most notable singing actresses, able to set an audience alight with the intensity and dramatic conviction of her portrayals. Her voice itself was a refulgent soprano, capable of expanding to the heights even when lower down it was occasionally intractable.

Philip Hope-Wallace, the Guardian's former opera critic, said that it seemed to get better and better the higher she sang. That, plus her bearing, made her the ideal exponent of many of the heroines of Wagner and Richard Strauss, of which she became a famed interpreter, such as Chrysothemis, the Marchschallin, Ariadne, Danae, culminating in the 1970s in a sensual, determined Salome.

Rysanek was heard far too seldom at Covent Garden, which never seemed fully to appreciate her gifts: for some reason, Georg Solti was not one of her advocates. However, in the 1950s, before he arrived in the house, I recall blinding portrayals of the

sang Sieglinde at the Bayreuth Festival, newly reopened in 1951. She knew she had got the role at audition when the producer, Wieland Wagner, the composer's grandson, commented: "My Sieglinde does not smoke". Her performance caused a sensation and she was soon in demand everywhere. At the Vienna State Opera, she was the Empress, destined to become one of her great roles. In the famous performances of Strauss's *Die Frau ohne*

Schatten there in 1955 under Karl Böhm, who was to become the singer's mentor, she already had the purity of sound and ethereal timbre so suited to the part. In 1966, she was acclaimed for her performance in the title role in Strauss's rarely heard *Die Ägyptische Helena* in Munich. Though she thought the part dull, the audience was enraptured by her singing of it.

Having fallen out in Vienna with Herbert von Karajan, she made her American debut



Centre stage... Rysanek in *Lohengrin* LEIBRECHT COLLECTION

At San Francisco in 1956 as Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer*, another of her favourite roles, which she sang with just as much success in 1959 and 1969. Her New York debut followed in 1958 when Rudolf Bing rowed with Callas, and Rysanek replaced her as Lady Macbeth. This proved another triumph, and from then, for 37 years, she was a darling of the house. During one performance as Senta, the audience applauded her throughout the second intermission, and she was her farewell there in 1996 as the old Countess in *The Queen of Spades* — and was accorded a 20-minute ovation.

As she grew older, and the higher reaches of her voice began to suffer, she rightly gave up the younger parts, as she once commented to me: "I wouldn't have anyone writing that I could be Siegmund's grandmother" — and carved out a new career for herself not only as *Klytemnestra* in *Elektra*, but also as *Herodias* in *Salome* and the *Kostelnicka* in *Jenufa*, where again her acting gifts were much to the fore.

Though she made studio recordings of many of her best roles, she told me she preferred, like many singers, to be caught on the wing in the opera house — and her live recordings prove it. She was also much admired in Italian opera: the only studio recording she liked was of Italian arias, made in 1959 and recently reissued — and I was lucky enough to hear her twice as Amelia in *Un ballo in maschera* in Vienna, a role of a woman in extremis that suited her histrionic gifts.

To meet, she confirmed the artistic dedication of her stage appearances. Though wise to all the pitfalls and intrigues attendant on an operatic career, she rose above them by honing in on the psychological core of each character she assumed. In that sense she was very much a singer for the second half of the century when beauty of tone alone was not enough.

She was twice married, first to the baritone Rudolf Grossmann, secondly to Ernest Gausman, who became her manager and mentor.

Alan Blyth
Leonie Rysanek, soprano, born November 14, 1926; died March 7, 1998

Weekend birthdays

SINCE he assured Tony Blair he wouldn't be bailing out of Britain, Michael Caine, 65 today, could pick up his bus pass with impunity. Chances are he won't, what with the dash from post estates such as Langan's Brasserie and the Canteen to supplement the takings from 70-odd films. The fish-porter's son done good, all right, since emerging as a superstar in the mid-1960s (cheers Alfie, Harry). And it's been a pleasure to watch the flash young cockney rebel mature into a weighty act. Well, sometimes. Now he can afford to knock the dust off the head. Let's give Harry Palmer the bullet, not more gnashing of teeth into their courage. Winner nonsense (*Bullseye!* indeed), and, unlike Alfie, he's a little picky. Get on the blower to Woody, Michael; your foolish, paunchy Romeo chasing Barbara Hershey in *Hannah and Her Sisters* was a joy. Or return to literature, where you had a couple of your finest moments: as Peachy in the Kipling tale, *The Man who would be King*, and, yes, Scrooge in *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (did you see his eight international cap; they were not awarded during the war. He appeared in all England's international games in the season of 1941-2, in the last of which, in Cardiff, he was injured. Wales won the match 1-0 and beat England



Today's other birthdays: Pam Ayres, poet, 51; Jasper Carrott, comedian, 63; Billy Crystal, actor and comedian, 51; Prof Sir Colin Dolly, physicist, 67; Quincy Jones, bandleader, 68; Sir Gavin Laird, trade union leader, 65; Tessa Sanderson, singer, 42; Anthony Smith, president, Magdalen College, Oxford, 60; Rita Tushingham, actress, 56.

Tomorrow's birthdays: David Bryer, director, Oxford, 64; Cy Cooder, blues guitarist, 51; Frank Dobson, MP, Secretary of State for Health, 58; Sumatra Gupta, author, 33; Deirdre Hutton, chairman, Scottish Consumer Council, 45; Michael Moore, chairman, NSFC, 62; Jimmy Nail, actor 45; Ben Okri, author, 39.

George Marks

Arsenal's forgotten footballer

GEORGE Marks, who has died aged 82, might be described as England's great forgotten goalkeeper. While his successor Frank Swift, who died in the Munich air crash, is remembered and venerated, Marks's eight international cap; they were not awarded during the war. He appeared in all England's international games in the season of 1941-2, in the last of which, in Cardiff, he was injured. Wales won the match 1-0 and beat England

powerful goal kick. Then, like many Arsenal players, he joined the Royal Air Force, for whose strong representative team he often played. The irony was that, despite appearing several times in England teams, he never won a full international cap; they were not awarded during the war. He appeared in all England's international games in the season of 1941-2, in the last of which, in Cardiff, he was injured. Wales won the match 1-0 and beat England



Marks... reliable

again the next autumn 2-1 at Wolverhampton. He went back to Wembley at the end of the season to play for the Arsenal team that won the League South Cup final, crushing Charlton Athletic 7-1. He was also the regular goalkeeper in Arsenal's League South-winning side. Later in the war he, like Swindon, was sent abroad. When the FA Cup competition was revived in January 1946, both goalkeepers were still in Europe. Arsenal, drawn against West Ham United, decided that whichever goalkeeper got back to London first should fill the part. In the event, it was Swindon, who let through half a dozen goals, Arsenal losing 6-0.

Tom Whittaker, the club's legendary trainer and later manager, said Swindon would play in the return match, just as a player who crashed should immediately be sent up in another aeroplane. This time, Arsenal won 1-0. Swindon kept his place for seasons to come, and Arsenal sold

Marks to Blackburn Rovers, where his old England and Arsenal captain, Eddie Hapgood, had just become manager. Both may have had bitter-sweet feelings when, in the second match of the 1946-7 championship, Arsenal lost 3-1 to Blackburn. Marks played solidly in goal.

In 1948, Marks moved to Bristol City but, within months, he had been transferred again. This time it was to Reading, of the Third Division South, where he became a popular and respected figure.

"You could forget about George Marks," Reading's trainer once said, "meaning you could always rely on him. But in another sense, Marks has been unkindly forgotten. Had it not been for an injured eye, and the war, so much more would surely have been heard of him."

Brian Glenville
George Marks, footballer, born April 9, 1915; died January 31, 1998

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

THE TELEVISION review by Desmond Christy, which should have appeared on Page 22 of the Friday Review yesterday, was usurped by a repeat of his review of Tuesday night's programmes. This appeared originally on Page 19, March 11, under the heading, Here's one we made nine months earlier. Human error was the cause.

ON PAGE 5, March 12, in a report headed, Survey finds convicted doctors treated le-

niently, we said: "Yet over those 21 years, nearly half of the doctors struck off were allowed back on the Medical Register". We should have said, half of those who applied to be reinstated were allowed back — which amounts to about a quarter of the total struck off.

AMONG errors in the German in an article about architecture under the Nazis, Pages 10 and 11, G2, March 9, were the following: the party news-

paper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, was consistently misspelt; the unalut was missing from Führerprinzip; German rules of capitalisation were eschewed, eg Volk and KdF-Wagen. In the same piece, Mitterrand was misspelt.

IN OUR City coverage, Page 21, yesterday, we incorrectly stated that the cigarette company Callagher had been spun off from the Hanson empire. It was Imperial Tobacco which was the former Hanson unit.

CORRECTION to a correction, Page 15, March 9: The original name of the Marriott Edgar monologue, recited by Stanley Holloway, was *The Lion and Albert*.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor, Ian Myles, by telephoning 0171 239 9589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 239 9897. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

A Country Diary

NORTH PEMBROKESHIRE: In this odd spring, a visit to the Welsh Wildlife Centre by the Teifi could produce anything. However, as far as the birds are concerned the length of daylight hours is more telling than temperature movement. They're still preparing for spring. One path follows the old Cardigan-Whitland railway, with luxuriant scrub on both sides — brambles, blackthorn, willow, hazel and gorse in flower. This provides shelter for chaffinches and

great tits, wrens and robins. blue tits and willow tits to proclaim their presence. On the lagoons and creeks, mallards are moving in pairs and the Canada geese greet each other with echoing cries. Further round, a flock of curlew are surprised on a field and wheel off with their haunting cry. Wispion whistle and rustle. Moorhens splatter around. The reedbeds are exposed to cold winds, but if the reeds are cut and formed into a fence, you find complete protection

in their lee. Some ponds hold sharp green iris spears, but most of the colour is on land. A wild rose in leaf, dandelion and lesser celandine glowing in the sunshine. The catkins on one willow were buzzing with bees and flies gathering the pollen. In one sheltered glade, the blackthorn was in full flower, but most are still thorny sticks. One hedge echoed with the sound of something dropped. With a wild scramble of wings, a sparrowhawk extricated itself and flew swiftly away along the track in front of us.

AUDREY INSCHE

Death Notices

MORROCCO, At Ninewells Hospital, Dundee on Tuesday, March 10, 1998, Alberto MORROCCO, 68, dearly loved husband of Vera, much loved father of Leon, Laurie and Lisa, a loving grandfather and great grandfather. Funeral service at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Dundee, on Thursday, March 12, at 11.45 pm. Interment thereafter at the Church of the Holy Trinity. Family flowers only please, or donations in lieu if desired may be made to Cancer Research at the church.

In Memoriam
HARTLEY, Herbert, late of Cheside Home and NHS Manchester, died "this" (Friday) at his home, 11, The Larches, Lymm, Cheshire, on March 11, 1998, aged 84. He was a socialist, remembered with pride and affection on the 10th anniversary of his birth. HAH:JH

HTT: please your announcement telephone 0171 239 9589 or 0171 239 9589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Black Friday for disability

We need a new definition

FOR disabled people, yesterday really was Black Friday. After months of speculation, the first official advisory study on disability benefits hit the press. It made grim reading for the 6 million plus disabled people and raised agonising questions for ministers, specialists and the public engaged in the reform of the welfare state. The new study by the advisory board on disability living allowance (DLA) — the 1992 benefit introduced in place of the old mobility allowance and attendance allowance for people under 65 — has concluded that 63 per cent of the 1.8 million allowances are "in conflict with the facts". The errors include misinterpreting medical evidence, insufficient medical evidence, and administrative mistakes in what the report describes as "a seriously flawed" administration. The authors are not a group of political hatchet men ready to help ministers apply the axe, but 18 distinguished medical and policy specialists, almost half of whom are disabled themselves and all of

whom are totally independent of government. They could not be more familiar with the benefit.

For a government which has been on the backfoot on welfare reform since it foolishly embraced the Tory plan to eliminate two separate lone-parent benefits, the advisory board's report is the first firm evidence to support its plan to reduce social security expenditure. Ministers would have been wiser to have published this report much earlier. Clearly some of its findings have been fed to Government spin doctors for their whispering campaign against disabled people in the political lobby. Presumably it was the public distrust which the spin doctors and lone-parent benefit cuts generated, that prevented ministers from publishing earlier — and only the appearance of the advisory board before the Commons select committee on social security next week which forced publication now.

Even today the situation is far from clear. The advisory board's report appears to contradict the Social Security Department's internal review of DLA, which found a much lower level of ineligibility — 4 per cent of allowances being stopped and 7 per cent reduced. More complicated still, DSS researchers in a new report, also published

this week, suggest the number of disabled people in Britain is 8.6 million — about 3 million higher than the last estimate a decade ago — and conclude that 70 per cent of these people are eligible for DLA, doubling the current £4.4 billion bill under the present rules. DLA has already grown by 700,000 since 1993 and more than doubled in cost.

Where do we go from here? DLA did have a chaotic launch and its self-assessment, while well-intentioned, appears to have seriously increased the error rate. The advisory board wants more rigorous independent medical checks, a higher eligibility threshold, and concentration on the severely disabled. It rightly criticises the main test for the care component — can the claimant cook a main meal — which should be replaced by a more thorough evaluation of an individual's capabilities. But the board's report coincides with a poisoned climate. Leaks late last year showed a government set on cutting DLA to raise extra cash for health and education — "dirty money" rightly rejected by David Blunkett among others. Blunkett also rightly rejected handing over the DLA to local councils — a move which would lead to covert cuts and unacceptable variations across the country. What we need is a

proper definition of disability, a clear clarification of the seeming contradictions in the separate reviews, and an open debate about the disability threshold at which benefits should begin. What must be resisted is any move to rob disabled people of rightful benefits just because ministers have raised insufficient tax.

Astral revelation

The answer is to confront it

THERE was a great earthquake: the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. The words are from Revelation. Whether or not they accurately describe the end of the world, only tidings of tell. But they are not a bad description of what might happen if the mile-wide asteroid called 1997 XF11 collides with Earth 30 years hence. Astronomers have already been forced to eat humble pie over unintentionally exaggerating how close it could come to the earth. But it might still be near

enough to give us all palpitations about mortality of an unexpected kind.

There would be no hiding place and no point in booking Concorde to a far outpost of the globe. A huge asteroid hitting the earth at a speed of 40 miles a second would ignite the atmosphere, expand the sea to steam setting up huge tidal waves, kilometres high, travelling at the speed of light. When the asteroid hit rock it would vaporise a huge area sending fractured rocks hurtling back into space which would then thunder back elsewhere to earth at 40 miles per second creating a fresh reign of terror. And soot, as Revelation cannily said, would darken the sky.

What can be done? As always prevention is better than cure. A calculated nuclear explosion some distance away might deflect it from its course (a direct hit would make things even worse by converting it from a deadly cannon ball into lethal grapeshot). Alternatively, part of the surface of the asteroid could be melted to alter its direction. Or it could be quarried for minerals thereby deflecting its course and helping humanity at the same time. One thing is certain. If there ever was a real danger it would cost a huge amount of money to avert. It might even deflect Gordon Brown from his current spending targets.

Letters to the Editor

Surfing the sewage system

JOANNA Rhythman (Pig Ignorant? Weekend, March 7) says "without animal manure... organic farming... is a complete no-no".

One of the benefits of a vegetarian diet is that our "humanure" can go straight into the compost box. Re-engineering the nation's sewerage system, whereby the effluent, both omnivore and vegetarian, is mixed with other organic residues and properly composted, would provide all the fertility that could be required. Charles Birch, Watchet, Somerset.

GILES Finemore (Letters, March 13) should check his stamp collection. On the 1967 stamp celebrating the journey of Gypsy Moth IV, there is a clear representation of its helmsman, the (then) very much alive Francis Chichester. Isn't it time the rule that no living people other than royals are depicted on stamps was quietly dropped — with the proviso that no living politician should ever be depicted? Matthew Diamond, Woodford Green, Essex.

I AM writing in reference to the letter concerning a commercial website (March 12). The address of the official royal website, with over 100 million accesses in its first year, is www.royal.gov.uk and not the address given in the letter. Anyone visiting the royal website will find quite clearly the opening times and prices of admission to all the occupied royal palaces (Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Holyrood House), Dickie Arbiter, Royal Collection, London.

HAVE any of your readers noticed that the number of product recalls advertised in the national press seems to be rising in direct proportion to the number of firms claiming to have various quality accreditations? Jenny Evans, Egham, Surrey.

Women's right to choose

It seems that in all this talk about single mothers vs two-income families (Leader, March 12) an important category has been missed out — women, including mothers, whose male partners are on the dole.

I found the two years when both my partner and myself were unemployed the most poverty-stricken and humiliating of my life. I was a mother, yes, but no less desperate for work to support my child than my partner was. I was not included in the unemployment figures, because, as a woman, I was classified as an "adult dependent" of my partner, whether I liked it or not. All money forthcoming from the state was given to him. I wasn't even entitled to reductions to those trendy 1800s gips who you got in cheap if you had a UB40 — because I wasn't even entitled to a UB40.

We must start to believe that a woman, whether she's a mum, a wife, a prostitute, or a church chorister, can be just as unemployed, just as poor, and often just as desperate to work, as a man. Whether she's single, or whether she's

got kids, or whatever. Just like a man in fact. Stella O'Shea, London.

YOUR leading article makes the important point that what mothers — and fathers, and children — need is choice, based on accessible, affordable childcare and flexibility at work.

The childcare subsidies which are widely predicted for next week's Budget are an excellent first step. Most working parents know that flexibility becomes more important, not less, as children grow out of full-time day-care and begin to move through the school system.

We see many excellent examples of family-friendly working: this year the winner of our annual Family Friendly Employer Award was a small employer, Walton Forest Housing Association, with runners-up Asda and Papworth Hospital. Other employers lack the information and support needed to change their practices. We hope that the Government will now look at how they can help other organisations

to make a real difference to their employees' family lives. Sarah Jackson, Sae Monk, Parents at work, London.

THANK you for stressing that women should have the "option of staying at home without being patronised for being just a mother". Tory tax policy treated some women as being more equal than others by taking money via the tax allowance system from women, lone parents as much as married mothers, who opted to stay at home, and giving it to women — and men — who went out to work.

Any non-Orwellian fiscal system should place families on an equal footing with single people and allow women the right to choose and control their lives without being penalised by the tax collector if they opt to stay at home. Denis MacShane MP, London.

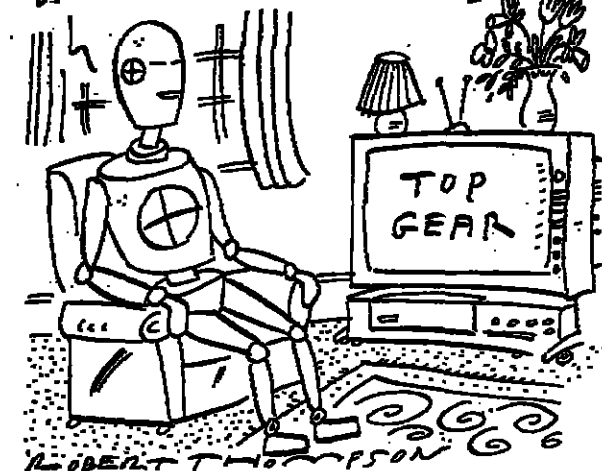
GIVEN the increasingly wider choices open to women throughout their lives, is it appropriate to be still labelling certain policy

areas "women's issues"? If we are to produce a society in which future generations do not have their aspirations and choices restrained by gender roles, surely it would be better to label these "family issues", which would emphasise the reality that not all women wish to have families of their own, and not all men wish to be excluded from, or marginalised in, child-rearing. Carol Jess, Glasgow.

THE government's plans to introduce income tax relief on childcare costs are to be applauded. I am disappointed, however, that tax relief is only to be given to parents using registered childminders, nurseries and after school clubs.

I employ a nanny/mother's help for 12 hours each week to care for my two pre-school children in their own home. Is there an assumption only high-income families employ nannies? Our family income falls well below £20,000 a year. Families employing nannies in the home must be included. Brown Brown, Edinburgh.

Worah!! I LOVE IT WHEN THEY DRIVE RECKLESSLY!



Hauteur on the highway

I'M sorry to see Jeremy Clarkson being attacked for his motoring programme (Loutish? Top Gear investigated, March 12). Far from being "loutish" and "loutish", he is a master of unconscious irony.

The baroque incantations he constructs with such measured fluency, as he peers with disdainful hauteur at the latest absurd glittering monster, remind us of the emptiness of desire and the obsessions with status that drive all of us. He is a man who has travelled without a purpose as he takes along empty country roads leading nowhere.

It may be better to travel than arrive, but even the pro-

cess of travel is rendered bizarre, and so, ridiculous, as he tests steering, roadholding and the rest of the technical nonsense he comes out with. Here is a man who does not believe in cars and is no doubt paid a vast salary for saying so. Never let him go.

I once imagined I wanted to buy a Porsche. After much tortured thought, I decided instead to pay for my daughter's education at university. It was after seeing one of Jeremy's programmes. It was almost a therapeutic experience: he deconstructed the seductions of desire and exposed its absurdities. Dr Anthony J Gilbert, Lancaster.

Slippery slope

TEN years ago I joined a tour of Lords during which I stood in the Long Room (Lords: what have they got to hide, March 13). Two things impressed me. For the first time in 40 years, I understood the significance of "the slope". And I was more than ever envious of the members, whose view of the game, from behind the bowler's arm, I have always favoured. These are the

things that matter in terms of exclusion. Mary Ticehurst, Cerephilly.

Cricket clubs are sumps of unreconstructed misogyny. Women have always been either teatime or tea-makers. Club secretaries can bask in the sunshine of the approaching season confident their own philosophy still reaches right to the top. Don Webb, London.

Ethics check on the West Bank

THE killing of the three Palestinians near Hebron (Shooting sparks West Bank riots, March 11) highlights crucial problems in how Israel enforces security in the West Bank. Palestinians have had a "checkpoint" culture imposed on them with over 40 military checkpoints in the West Bank, as well as 27 in the Gaza Strip. These do not include surprise checkpoints.

Shooting of Palestinians has happened at these checkpoints before, whilst H'tselem, the Israeli Human Rights group, has reported on many cases of sexual harassment, including making 15 Palestinian women undress in front of their children on the pretext of a search for weapons. Pregnant Palestinian women have even been denied access to hospitals in Jerusalem and have given birth at checkpoints.

To travel from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, queues can mean a wait of up to two hours for Palestinians. ID cards are demanded at gunpoint. Four permits are required for a Palestinian to enter Jerusalem to work — an ID card, a magnetic ID card, a work permit, and an entry permit.

Israeli settlers are excused such treatment and even have their own road system. David Watkins, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, London.

DID I miss the swinging condemnation by our ethical Foreign Secretary of the killings of innocent civilians and the gassing and stoning of children on the West Bank? Or does he only condemn what he is allowed to by the State Department? Nigel Press, Hatfield, Herts.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters; shorter ones are more likely to appear. The Country Diary is on page 7.

Late-breaking news from ITN

NEWS at Ten is entertaining news, going down the same road as any commercial programme with low ratings (And finally — the News at Eleven, March 12).

Television is an escape from, not an encounter with, the reality of life, and most of its programme-makers create an illusion of life best-suited to their financiers, who require more viewers to buy the advertised product, service or ideology. Unfortunately for ITV, more and more reality-hungry people are switching off this illusion, and getting an entertaining, relaxing life outside of TV's sphere of influence. Scrap ITV News at Ten: merely a necessary act of desperation

to keep viewers switched on to bigger illusions. Richard W Symonds, Crawley, W Sussex.

NO decision has been made to scrap News at Ten. There are a number of options under consideration, including leaving the news where it is, ITV is reviewing every aspect of the schedule. This is public information which we announced at our presentation to advertisers in January. We are now in a multi-channel market-place. Competition for viewers is fierce and lifestyles and expectations have altered. ITV cannot afford to stand still. David Liddiment, Director of programmes, ITV, London.

to keep viewers switched on to bigger illusions. Richard W Symonds, Crawley, W Sussex.

NO decision has been made to scrap News at Ten. There are a number of options under consideration, including leaving the news where it is, ITV is reviewing every aspect of the schedule. This is public information which we announced at our presentation to advertisers in January. We are now in a multi-channel market-place. Competition for viewers is fierce and lifestyles and expectations have altered. ITV cannot afford to stand still. David Liddiment, Director of programmes, ITV, London.

ALAS, your description of ITN's News at Ten as "one of Britain's most prestigious news programmes" is probably sadly all too true. Only rarely do the others rise above the parade of banal, largely human interest, stories served up nightly as News at Ten. John Montgomery, London.

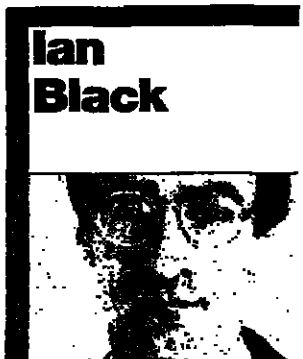
DAVID Liddiment tells us that News at Ten was "made famous by the bongs at the start and the 'And finally' at the end". It is also famous for never starting on time. In the interests of accuracy I propose the replacements should be known as News at Six Thirty-Five and News at Some Time Eleven. Canon John Pouch, Bradley Stoke, S Glos.

Shell shocked

IN HIS Eco-Soundings (Society, March 11), John Vidal suggested concern for the environment in the philosophy department at King's College, London has been dampened by Shell's financial support for the King's Centre of Philosophical Studies. At a meeting of the department's staff and students on this issue, nearly all who spoke expressed disquiet about Shell's record on the environment and human rights. In a vote some were in favour of immediate dissociation from Shell, but more felt we should use any influence deriving from our connection with Shell to add to the pressure on them to improve their record. David Papiernu, King's College, London.

Britain risks missing a chance to advance peace in the Middle East

The fifty years war



NO ONE will catch Robin Cook napping when he flies to the Middle East tomorrow to try to get the stalled Israeli-Palestinian negotiations moving again. Talks in Cairo, Amman, Gaza, Jerusalem, Damascus and Beirut — all in a whirlwind three days — will provide opportunities galore to encourage the moderates, cajole and condemn the recalcitrant and do Britain's bit in a very good cause. But our busy foreign secretary faces a tough time: to the annoyance of hyper-sensitive,

naval-gazing Arabs and Israelis the trip was twice postponed because of more pressing business. His only foray into the region was last month's dash to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to rally support for the bombing of Iraq. And more than any other international issue the Middle East exposes New Labour, just like old Tories, to Britain's perpetual tug between its Atlantic and European identities.

Watch out for the carefully-staged stunts and photo-opportunities that routinely accompany Cook's tours. But don't expect him to copy David Mellor — who as junior FO minister lined up the TV cameras and humiliatingly bawled out an Israeli army officer in the Gaza Strip a decade ago as the Palestinian *Intifada* was in full swing.

Much water has flowed down the Jordan since that spat and today Yasser Arafat is in charge in Gaza. In 1998 Israel was still fighting what it saw as a terrorist organisation — though by then PLO supporters were mostly lobbing stones, not grenades. It had a formal peace with Egypt and

an informal one with Jordan. But it wasn't prepared to go to the heart of the problem and disentangle itself from the Palestinians.

Cook is right to insist that the "Bibi" Netanyahu is legally obliged to implement the Oslo self-rule accords — signed by his assassinated Labour predecessor Yitzhak Rabin — whether he likes them or not. And his meeting with the Peace Now movement in Jerusalem is intended to make the point that a sizeable number of Israelis want their own prime minister, to behave differently.

Talks with Syria's President Hafez al-Assad — past the great nod-nod-wink-wink get-the-hint mural of Saladin carving up the Crusaders in the 12th century — show that wider strategic picture. Not much chance of getting down to ethical issues there, but never mind. It's a tough neighbourhood, as Bibi likes to say. Yet Britain could do still more in the Middle East. As long ago as 1980 Europe lined

up behind the demand for Palestinian self-determination as the only just and practical way to settle the conflict. Statehood is implicit in Oslo but the agreement remains flawed by this goal not being spelled out. Britain and Europe both support it and the presidency of the EU — bankrolling the peace process — is the perfect platform for persuading Washington to follow suit. But instead the policy is simply to "complement" the United States, constrained as ever by its own domestic politics from doing more than coddle the Israelis. Cook says he is talking to Madeleine Albright about this. He should get on his hotline and keep trying.

Arabs had great expectations of what Labour would do for their cause and they have been disappointed: a conference on Palestinian refugees at Warwick University does not quite count as a new initiative. Tony Blair cares as much about Israel and Jews (though these are not always the same thing, especially under Netanyahu) as Margaret Thatcher, his instinctive Atlanticism and personal rap-

port with Bill Clinton have contrived to create a climate where the pro-Arab lobby, inside and outside government, feels they have lost the argument. Derek Fatchett, a junior minister, was booed by Arab businessmen recently when he talked tough on Iraq but barely mentioned the parlous state of the peace process. Of course perceptions matter, though the double standards argument you hear from Rabat to Riyadh is not entirely convincing. Certainly most western countries are more tolerant of Zionists than Ba'athists. But Israel is not Iraq, Bibi no Saddam. Soundbites are not sari.

YET AN opportunity is being lost and there is a lack of feeling for the depth and complexity of conflict Britain was instrumental in shaping. If he needs a reminder of this Cook need only glance up from his desk at the fine bust of Ernest Bevin, on the job in King Charles Street when the Palestine mandate collapsed under its own impossible contradictions and slid into war.

Bevin was smeared by Zionists as an anti-semitic — an image he obligingly lived up to with undiplomatic asides about Jews "pushing to the head of the queue" (of refugees in post-war Europe). But he shed an impossible burden for a country beginning the painful process of imperial withdrawal. And his weary surrender of the issue to the United Nations in 1947 is the starting point for a fine new documentary starting on BBC tomorrow night, coincidentally about the time Cook will be landing in Egypt.

Brian Lapping and Norma Percy, the award-winning team who produced the Death Of Yugoslavia, have combined their both-sides-of-the-hill interview techniques with contemporary newsreels in a riveting series they call The Fifty Years War — the title alone a useful counterpoint to the anodyne "don't mention the wars" celebration of Israel's jubilee this May.

So what? It is often said that the Holy Land has too much history and not enough geography. Not true. Not enough people understand the circum-

stances in which Israel was born and the Palestinians were dispossessed. Look at the furious debate about Israel's "new historians", vilified for delving into long-classified archives to introduce the concept of ethnic cleansing into what used to be a heroic narrative of a war of liberation against overwhelming odds in which a huge number of Arabs miraculously fled.

It helps to know — as the film shows — that even in the darkest days secret contacts continued between the sides. It is encouraging to see a Palestinian broadcaster admitting to faithfully exaggerating the scale of the notorious Deir Yassin massacre and triggering a paroxysm of exodus. It is cheering to look back to the high hopes created by Oslo if only to remember glumly how far things have slid since then. It is important to remember that the truth is necessary before there can be reconciliation.

By contrast, Netanyahu's version of history is frighteningly simplistic — and should be challenged. "Europeans know nothing about the Middle East," he admonished them last week. "Our problem with Europe is that all of you have a colonial past and think the hills of Jerusalem and Samaria are like those France occupied in Algeria and Spain. Only the United States understands us and not, as many people believe, because there is a large Jewish community there, but because they identify with us as the new promised land, as is America itself."

Israel can be justly proud of many achievements, in agriculture, technology and the extraordinary ingathering of Jews from the four corners of the earth. But it can never be truly at peace with itself or its neighbours, until it has resolved the conflict with the Palestinians. Half a century ago Bevin gave way to Washington with an exasperated summary of the US view: "Let there be an Israel and to hell with the consequences." Complicating America, in the Middle East today should not mean that Britain keeps quiet on a Cook's tour that could make a difference.

Satu

It was Catch-

Mark Lawson

W

It was Catch-18

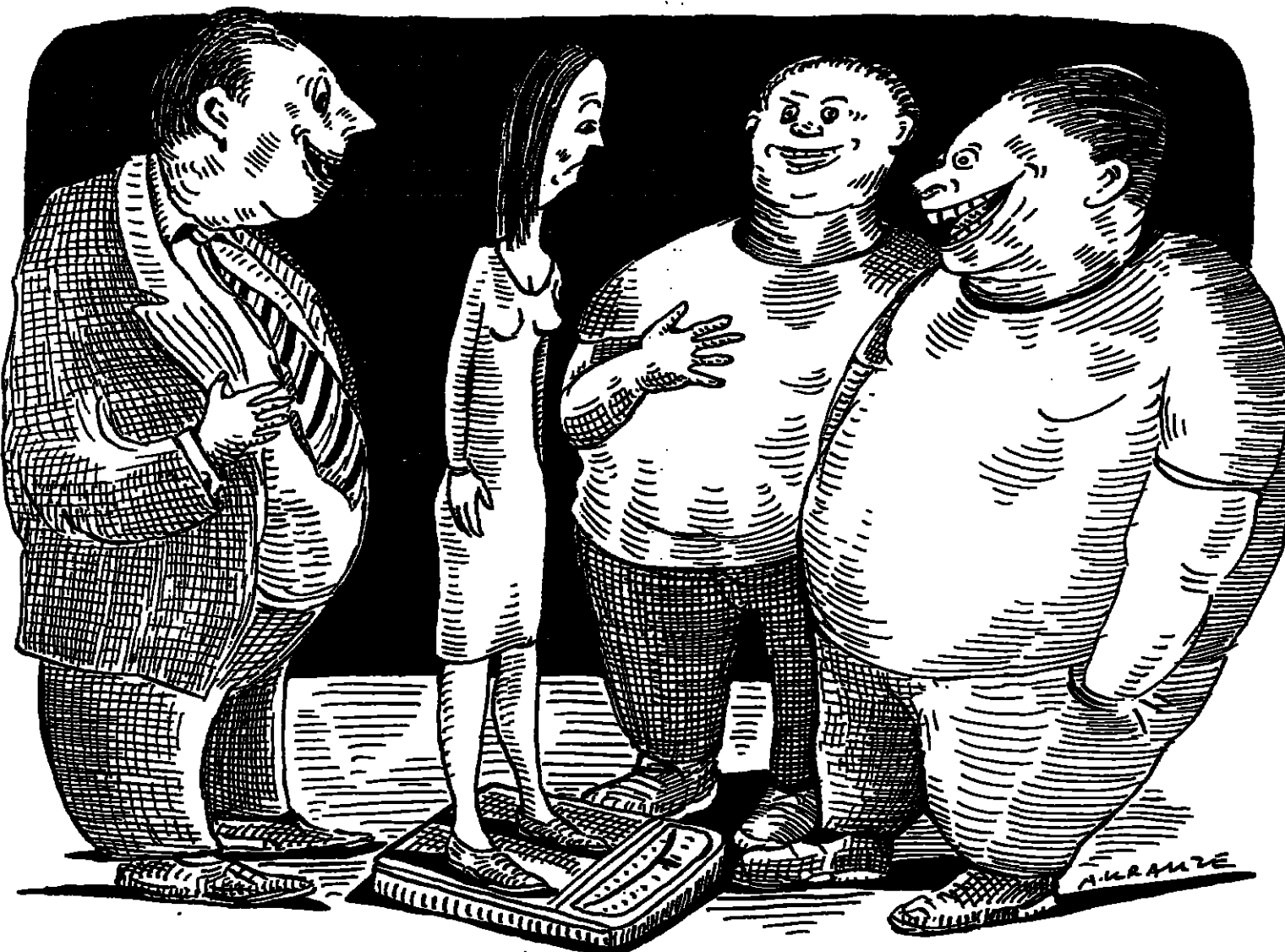


And so, if that sum had not been done, we might now be walking around saying to each other: "That's a real Catch-18 situation?" Or would we say: "These tinular notes mislead the imagination for the reader. If F Scott Fitzgerald had stuck with the inspiration which led him to type *The High Bouncing Lover* on one of those rainy nights he had not subsequently changed to *The Great Gatsby*, would the book still have its iconic status? Would T S Eliot's *The Wasteland* (one of those books which achieve perfection by discarding a word or two) become a work of satomphere (and themes) have flourished under their earlier alibi of *He Do The Police In Different Colours*? Does the rise of the aristicle baptism make it more difficult to see the chances of success? I have been thinking about titles a

THERE are four main kinds of title. The first is the kind with which most early authors and audiences were content — is the kind of kitchen labelling in which the contents of the work are simply summarised by name and place (Beowulf, Hamlet, Middlemarch, etc.). The second is the kind with which the ancients (and some) were content. The second is the semi-poetic summary of the theme (Sense And Sensibility, Love's Labour's Lost, Fatal Attraction).

Next is the use of a found phrase, whether from literature or the vernacular (You Never Can Tell, Something Wicked This Way Comes, The Full Monty, The Wide Sargasso Sea). The fourth type — the most fashionable of which reflects the use of parody and the fact that so many titles have been used up — is the pun on an existing work (All Quiet On The Preston Front, Fatal Attraction, and the

Yet, for all the sweat shed over what to put on the cover or poster or canvas, such baptismal angst may be unnecessary. Whoever talked Fitzgerald into *The Great Gatsby*, or who got *The Love Lover* has earned the gratitude of literary posterity. But duff titles like *Good Will Hunting* become well-known because of being attached to an otherwise appealing product, while inspired titles (for example, Alice Thomas Ellis's book *The Evening Of Adam*) are not widely enough known because of the less-than-stellar product. When it comes to the naming of art, this is the Catch-18 situation.



Thin women



Earlier this year, watchmakers Accurist similarly saw fit to lump paranoia with purchasing power in their "Put some weight on" campaign. The image of a sickly wraith

Concerns about body image are by no means the sole preserve of women. But women's bodies remain the sole preserve of a society which appropriates their image for display and distortion. For most men, a washboard stomach is participatory, positive and finite. For most women, a size 10 is

The furor over Winslet's body mass also illustrates a keenness to provide larger than life lovelies with an escape clause. Public identities of big women are laden with caveats: Dawn French eels away with it

But as our outsize role models become specialised, we calmly avoid accepting that a supermodel (the ultimate aesthetic) exists as an all-inclusive package — biologically unlikely balance of leg, cheek,

Slow trains



Of course, I might have just killed them a load of avaricious and incompetent bastards, and advised them to spend their millions on a ranch in Paraguay, guarded by guns and rottweilers, because I might just want to kill them.

The staff are also to receive almost £30,000 each. Some of them may feel they deserve it for granting their mas-

This country's love-hate relationship with its railway system has been going on for well over 150 years now. The original private companies which existed prior to 1921 used to be known by disrespectful use of their initials: the M & GN, the Midland and Great Northern, was the Mud-dle & Go Nowhere; the S & D, Somerset & Dorset, the Slow & Dirty. And so on.

This is a crime not only against the people, but against history




By 1980 it was possible to get from Paddington to Newport in 84 minutes. The fastest train in 1998 takes 96 minutes. The norm is 105. And these timings are about to be stretched by another five or seven minutes in the next timetable because the company is incapable of keeping even to this schedule. Under

FRIDAY 13th STOP PRESS:
18 minutes late one way, engine trouble; 13 minutes late the other, ponies on the line near Severn Tunnel Junction. Honest.

Australia	18p	N. Zealand	27p
Germany	12p	Pakistan	72p
Hong Kong	27p	S. Africa	34p
India	50p	Thailand	72p
Ireland	10p	UK	5p
Japan	20p	USA	8p

Call us today for details on fantastic savings to hundreds of other destinations and how to open your pre-paid account.

0800 769 0033

   Call 1800 794 361 if you live in Ireland
1800 836 5005 if you live in the USA.

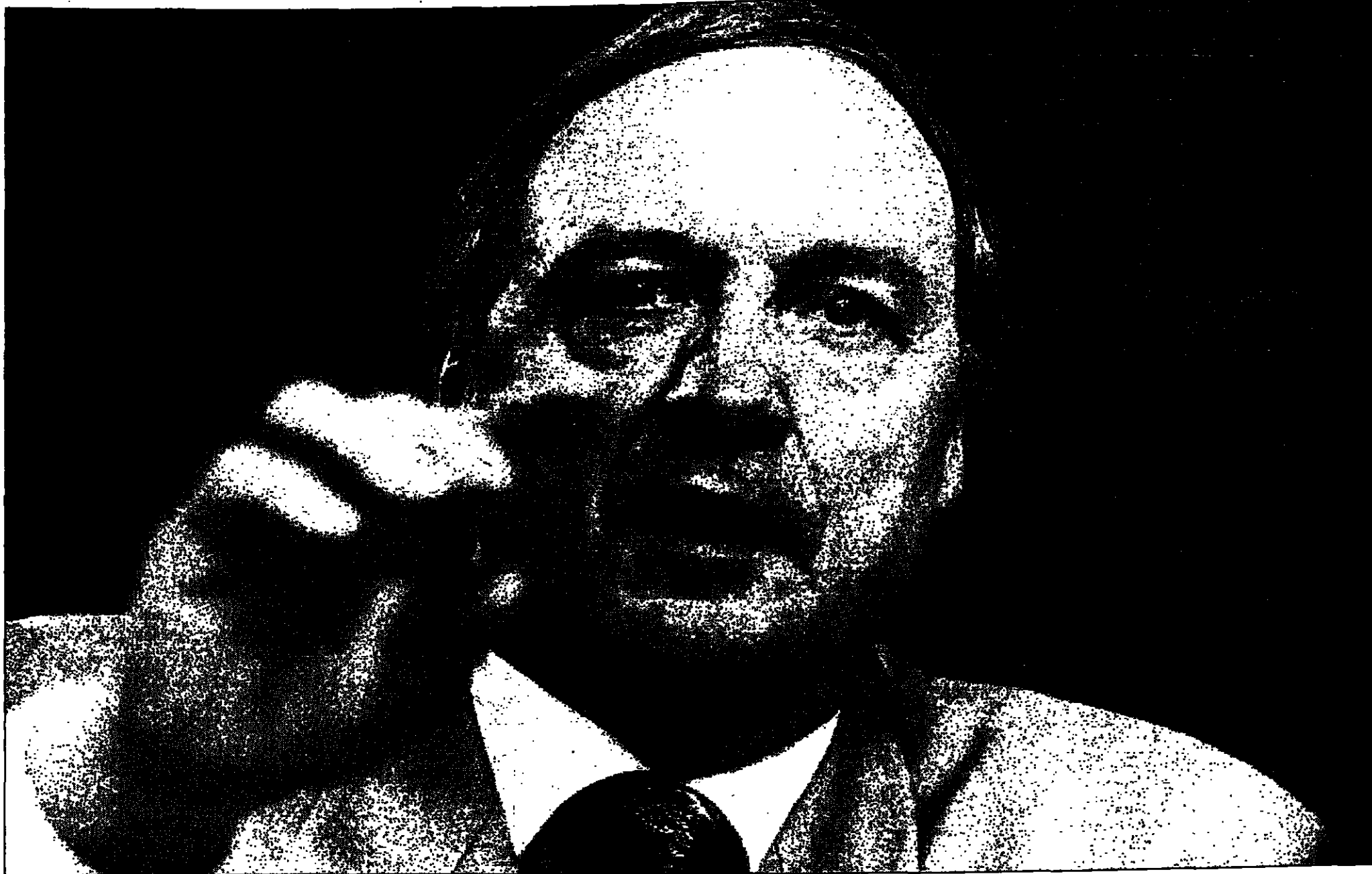
BUSINESS 0800 769 2222

These all peak prices are available 7 days a week. Midnight - 11am. Discounts based on a minimum pre-pay of £100. One car per room is available to use only. Prices correct as of 08.07.08.

10 FINANCE AND ECONOMICS

Reputations

Karel Van Miert takes a hard line on mergers. JULIE WOLF in Brussels asks why the competition enforcer is such a formidable foe to big business



Zenit without dogma... Karel Van Miert can appear to be influenced by how company chiefs handle the Brussels machine
PHOTOGRAPH: NATHALIE KOULISCHER

Go ahead, make Karel's day

KAREL Van Miert was throwing footballs at reporters last week. The European commissioner for competition wasn't drawing attention to the vexed issue of World Cup tickets. He wanted the assembled hacks to sign the footballs as a farewell to his long-serving spokesman, Willy Helin, who was off to a job in Washington.

The scene was vintage Van Miert. Charming, down-to-earth boss and celebrity at the same time, Europe's anti-monopoly chief made an almost embarrassingly heartfelt tribute to a person in a job that some commissioners view with disdain.

Several days later, press attention was back on Mr Van Miert, this time because two publishers — Reed Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer — scrapped their merger plans, citing tough demands by regulators. Although the commissioner's new spokesman said the problems could have been addressed, the lesson was familiar. Companies and governments ignore the EU's anti-monopoly authority at their peril.

In the past five years, Mr Van Miert has pushed tele-

coms liberalisation on reluctant Continental governments, blocked state aid in sensitive sectors such as steel and cars and risked a transatlantic trade war to get changes in US aerospace giant Boeing's takeover of McDonnell Douglas.

This year, the commissioner is taking on powerful sports bodies, such as the organisers of Formula One racing and international football, over their business practices. He's also engaged in difficult negotiations with airlines, including British Airways, over the terms of transatlantic alliances and with the French government over the future of ailing bank, Credit Lyonnais.

In January he imposed a record fine on Volkswagen for preventing cross-border car purchases by consumers, though the company still denies it broke EU law. Even more sensitive is a review of a Bonn-supported planned digital television venture involving Kirch Group, Bertelsmann and Deutsche Telekom. The 56-year-old Flemish Socialist isn't your average free-marketier, however. He criticised Renault when it closed a Belgian plant without telling the workers in advance. He avoids political



In-tray items for Karel Van Miert include the proposed alliance between British Airways and American Airlines. He is crossing swords with the organisers of Formula One racing and with Deutsche Telekom over its digital TV venture with Kirch and Bertelsmann

dogma, preferring to see himself as an enforcer of European law.

That's not to say the commissioner doesn't have firmly held beliefs. The childhood memory of German soldiers storming his parents' farmhouse in Flanders helped to make him an ardent supporter of European integration. He also sees state subsidies to industry and government meddling in businesses as inefficient and

ultimately bad for the consumer.

This view has hardened over Mr Van Miert's nine years at the commission, handling first transport and then competition. His decision to allow big state aid packages to Air France and Iberia while transport commissioner led to clashes with the then competition commissioner, Sir Leon Brittan.

But some outsiders now see these as the quid pro quo for airline liberalisation that Mr Van Miert was also pursuing. Nonetheless, when he took over from Sir Leon in 1993, few predicted the zeal with which Mr Van Miert would use the considerable regula-

tory powers. He had disagreed with Sir Leon's decision to block a merger between De Havilland and a Franco-Italian consortium. This led to fears that he would put European industrial policy ahead of competition law.

Some people still accuse him of that. There were mutterings in the US that Mr Van Miert was really trying to protect Airbus when he threatened to rule the Boeing-McDonnell link-up illegal unless Boeing dropped exclusive supply deals with airlines. The commissioner strongly denied this, arguing that the merger risked limiting choice of planes for carriers.



tence that the commission review the alliance between BA and American Airlines, while other transatlantic link-ups had attracted less attention from Brussels.

EU officials say it's natural for Brussels to look more closely at larger deals, because these pose the greatest threat to competition. Perhaps more on target are complaints that Mr Van Miert seems influenced by the way that companies handle the commission.

For example, press reports that BA had accused Brussels of sloppy analyses and foot-dragging provoked an angry response from the commissioner. And signs that Boeing and McDonnell weren't taking the EU review seriously prompted the commissioner to voice his objections during a trip to the US. Given American regulators say little until they have made a decision, Mr Van Miert's comments raised concerns in the US that he was prejudging the case.

AT THE very least, Mr Van Miert's habit of offering the press tidbits on pending cases can upset companies.

But it may be Mr Van Miert's style suits some people better than others. No great orator, he can appear down to earth, earnest and self-deprecating at times and strong-willed and thin-

skinned at others. A former chairman of the Flemish Socialist Party, he combines political skills learned in the Belgian deal-making world with the sharp mind of an academic turned bureaucrat.

According to those who have watched him negotiate, Mr Van Miert tends to start off with a firm view of EU law and what it means in each individual case. After initial discussions, however, he is willing to get down to bargaining to find a solution. The fact that this can be done in four or five EU languages does him no harm. And Commission officials praise his mastery of complex cases.

There's no doubt that he gets results, and this is acknowledged by regulators in member states. Even those in Germany who have pressed for an independent European cartel office are careful not to criticise the commissioner, saying only that the process is open to political influence because decisions have to be voted on by the full 20-member commission.

The ultimate test of Mr Van Miert's aggressive policies will be who replaces him when the current commission's term runs out at the end of 1999. Mr Van Miert has said he wants to leave then, perhaps returning to academic life. If governments are really fed up, they may go for a softer-spoken figure. But there's no guarantee that they won't be in for a surprise.

The Guardian Monthly Movie

OSCAR AND LUCINDA

Tickets for preview screenings

Based on Peter Carey's hugely successful Booker-prize winning novel and directed by Gillian Armstrong (My Brilliant Career), Oscar and Lucinda is a spectacular chronicle of a rapidly changing Victorian Australia. Ralph Fiennes stars as Oscar, a brave but vulnerable man of God with a penchant for gambling, who finds an unlikely soulmate in Lucinda, a wealthy heiress who strives, against the odds, to live life by her



own rules. We have organised special preview screenings of Oscar and Lucinda with Twentieth Century Fox at cinemas across the country, at 11am on Sunday March 29. To claim a pair of complimentary tickets, simply call the hotline number of the cinema (listed below) where you would like to see the film.

All films start at 11am prompt.
Bristol 0891 338 278
Cambridge 0891 338 279
Glasgow 0891 338 280
Leeds 0891 338 281
Leicester 0891 338 282
London 0891 338 283
Manchester 0891 338 284
Newcastle 0891 338 285
Sheffield 0891 338 286
York 0891 338 287

Terms & Conditions: 1. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. 2. Lines open at midnight Friday March 13 and close at midnight Tuesday March 17. 3. Seats will be allocated randomly from all calls received. 4. Legal restrictions of the certificate apply. 5. No cash alternatives are offered. 6. Readers must go to the cinema which they have selected. 7. In the event of any dispute, the decision of the GVG is final. 8. Holiday excludes insurance and taxes, is subject to availability and must be taken before December 5 1998 (with the exception of peak times). Flights are economy class return. 9. The Promoter: The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER. BAPA 000

Win a trip to Australia

Everyone who applies for tickets will be entered into a draw to win a fabulous holiday for two in Australia, courtesy of the Australian Tourist Commission. Flying with Qantas Airways to Sydney, the winners will receive a 12 night flag hotel pass allowing them the flexibility to experience the stunning countryside of the real Australia. For further information on travel to Australia ring 0891 833235 (calls charged at 50p per call) for a 1998/9 Travellers Guide.

Cradle of the bankers' caveat

Euro Eye

Europe's banks are at a crossroads. But whichever way they go, customers must beware the Maastricht effect, says MARK MILNER

IT IS a pleasant place, Maastricht. Even in a sharp March wind it has a comfortable, well-fed air. Barges nudge their way up the river Maas, and morning rush-hour owes more to bikes than commuters' cars. Pleasure steamers moored along the river bank, a raft of cafes in the city's neat squares, give notice of summer days to come. Only remnants of fortification serve as a reminder of Maastricht's sometimes turbulent past. The city, however, has just enough manufacturing industry to stop it slipping into the merely twee.

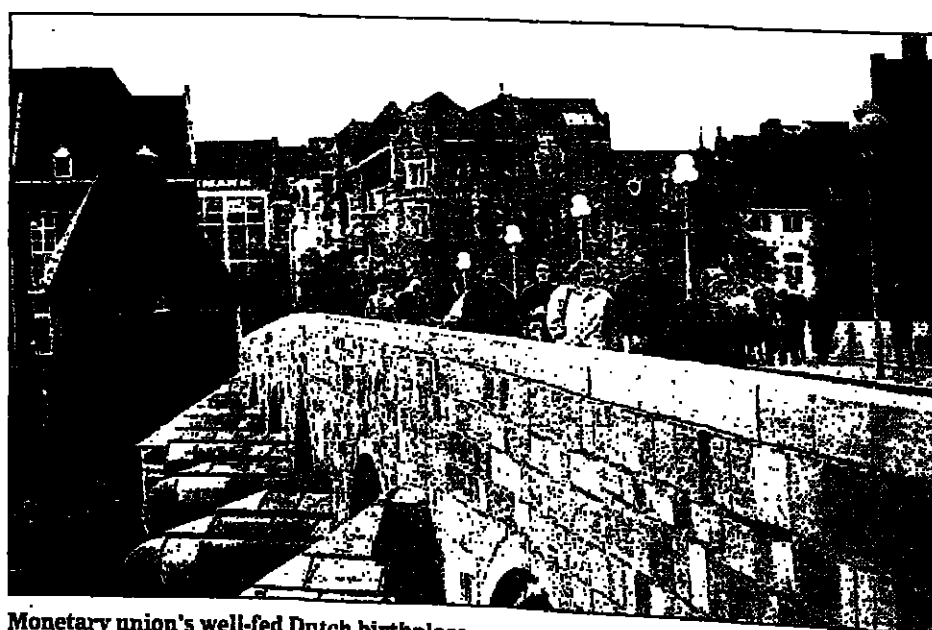
Odd, then, that it should be so closely associated with Europe in a hair shirt. Yet it was in the Dutch town, close to the German and Belgian borders, that Europe's political leaders signed up for the single currency. With their treaty came the cuts in spending that have hit Europe from Helsinki to Rome and from Bonn to Dublin. Scarcely had the ink dried than critics were

characterising the Maastricht treaty as the charter for a bankers' Europe.

Some bankers might disagree. The single currency is forcing changes on their industry, pushing it towards consolidation.

The European Banking Federation reckons monetary union will cost the industry between 8 billion and 10 billion euros (\$5.2 billion and \$6.5 billion). Banks may offset some costs by ensuring that their systems are millennium-compliant, but the price is still steep enough — especially if accompanied by a loss of business without the compensation of new products, so customers should beware.

The cost of getting ready for the euro is only one of the factors pushing Europe's banks into each other's arms. The single currency will change how the industry, nationally and regionally based, defines its "home" market. Deutsche and Dresdner are "German" banks, BNP and Crédit Lyonnais are French, and ABN AMRO



Monetary union's well-fed Dutch birthplace

PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL O'DRISCOLL

and ING are Dutch, even though all have extensive operations outside their country of origin.

So far, consolidation has largely followed national or regional boundaries. Bavaria's Hypo and Verelins and Westbank have merged. Italian consolidation seems to be shaping up domestically; even the merger of Union Bank of Switzerland and Swiss Bank Corporation could be seen as home grown.

As national consolidation progresses, it will acquire a cross-border dimension — of which Benelux has already seen the beginnings.

In a Europe seen to have too many bank branches already, expansion can be achieved only by buying existing networks or exploiting telephone-based banking. Many are convinced the race will go either to the strong, or to those nimble enough to exploit unseen niches.

But could banks get too big? Many top European banks are trying to be all things to all customers, well as the big corporate: grafting investment banking on to their traditional, branch-oriented business. They could get bigger yet as

insurance companies try to marry their products with banks' distribution potential via the so-called bancassurance concept.

Yet the competitive challenge comes also from their more focused rivals. On the one hand are American investment banks, on the other those which, like Lloyds TSB in Britain, have stuck to traditional banking but done it more profitably and are now looking for geographical expansion. Today's big nationals will be tomorrow's conglomerate banks. And we all know what can happen to conglomerates.

Brow

200m d
arings bUS buys US d
business for £520

Saturday Notebook

Eating mergers for breakfast



Edited by
Alex Brummer

THE AGE of the mega-merger, heralded on October 13 last year when \$60 billion of deals affecting British companies were engineered in one day, is being given a nasty fright by competition regulators on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Europe, Karel Van Miert (Reputations, page 24) has established himself as a forceful and potentially combative regulator, as the breakdown of the publishing merger between Reed Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer has shown. Meanwhile in the United States, his opposite number, Joel Klein, anti-trust chief at the Department of Justice, is taking an equally intrusive approach to mergers.

The tough American approach should not come as a great surprise. After all, it is more than a century since the landmark Sherman Anti-Trust Act, the legislation aimed at stamping out monopoly power, became law. That was until the laissez-faire years of Reagan rule, when the long-running anti-trust action against IBM was smothered and such activity was seen as not reflecting a pro-business stance.

Of course, being pro-business and also against anti-competitive practices are not mutually exclusive. That is what current practice on both sides of the Atlantic appears to be about. Rather than blankly refusing to approve mergers or taking on a global player like Microsoft, the goal is to examine the deal clinically, probe the overlaps and anti-competitive areas and cut them out.

This was precisely the way in which US and British authorities dealt with the GrandMet-Guinness combination. The merged company, Diageo, was required to divest the gin brand Bombay Sapphire and, more importantly, Dewar's, the biggest-selling whisky brand in the US.

This new approach is creating waves on both sides of the Atlantic. Earlier this week, it was disclosed that Mr Klein has serious reservations about the proposed merger between America's second-largest long-distance telecom carrier, MCI, and WorldCom. It will be remembered that this deal was invented just as the earlier proposed MCI-BT combination had passed through most of the regulatory loops. If it were to be seen as uneconomic now because of the requirement for competitive adjustment, then BT could be short-changed by \$7 billion (\$4.2 billion).

This more interventionist approach, which may be enshrined by Britain's Office of Fair Trading and Monopolies and Mergers Commission, has the capacity to change the way in which stock markets view merger announcements.

The normal reaction, as seen with Glaxo Wellcome-SmithKline Beecham, is for share prices to soar on public disclosure of a deal, with regulatory requirements seen as the least of the problems. In fact, in the case of SmithKline Beecham, Downing Street was concerned on public interest grounds about the earlier possibility of a merger with American Home Products, which would have taken a key UK pharmaceutical group overseas. This triggered the subsequent Glaxo interest.

In an era of greater competitive alertness by the authorities, almost no takeover announcement can any longer be seen as routine, nor can commercial alliances. Bob Ayling of British Airways and Robert Crandall of American Airlines would be among the first to testify to this.

Green alert

TUESDAY is Chancellor Gordon Brown's last chance to prove Labour's green credentials to the environmentalists.

There is no doubting the desire of ministers such as John Prescott and Michael Meacher for measures to cut pollution and improve resource use. If there is a problem, it lies with the Treasury, which has a long record of ignoring or blocking green measures with the exception of the landfill tax, introduced by Kenneth Clarke.

The Chancellor has had two chances to prove that he could capitalise on Mr Clarke's breakthrough — his modest Budget in July and the November statement. But he flunked them both.

One excuse for the lack of action has been the imminent White Paper on Transport. It is fair enough, too, to wait for such consultation before introducing dramatic measures like raising money from private motorists and spending it on public transport.

But that does not explain why Mr Brown failed to introduce some simple changes, such as ending the lunatic company car-tax regime.

Nor has there been any justification for failing to cut VAT on energy-saving materials at the same time as cutting VAT on fuel.

It remains a mystery, too, why the landfill tax was not increased and extended, and why there has been no encouragement for environmental technologies. But perhaps Mr Brown will surprise us all on Tuesday.

Barings winners

ONE OF the favourite phrases mouthed by central bankers when describing why bankrupt financial institutions and even countries should not be bailed out is "moral hazard".

If any one institution or country is rescued then there is increased risk that others will behave foolishly in the safe knowledge that there will always be a lender of the last resort to sort things out. That has been very much the case in the Korean banking system during the recent crisis.

When Barings collapsed in 1995 after running up losses of \$860 million in derivatives trading in Singapore, the Bank of England refused to step in, and called in the liquidators. It was the time, the company was immediately sold for £1, bailing out almost everyone involved except those with the "risk" capital — classified as the shareholders and bondholders who were punished for such a risk.

At one stage some bonds were trading for less than a pound each. But no longer, it would seem: Ernst & Young, the liquidators, have now found £190 million to pay off the bonds. The company was before the Barings family and other shareholders demand their cut? After all, in the new world of global finance, nobody loses.

News in brief

Gates's cache yields \$322m

Microsoft chairman Bill Gates raised \$322 million (£193 million) last month by selling shares in the software company he co-founded. Senior executives including Mr Gates sold shares worth \$1.6 billion during the month, the group said yesterday.

PanAm fier off

Financier Carl Icahn's offer to buy the failed PanAm airline for \$43 million got the cold shoulder from United States bankruptcy court judge Jay Cristol yesterday, who said it was not the solution to the airline's problems.

Hong Kong bus bid

Two British transport groups, Stagecoach Holdings and First Group, have formed separate partnerships with Hong Kong firms to bid for the franchise to operate 88 Hong Kong routes.

EU fund for Asia

Europe's foreign ministers, meeting in Edinburgh yesterday, urged Indonesia to follow the International Monetary Fund's rescue plan. They also agreed a \$100 million trust to be used for Asian grants.

Asset swap leaves Lonrho big in coal

Don Atkinson

MILLIONS of pounds' worth of mineral assets changed hands yesterday as Lonrho announced a share and asset swap that will give it control of both South Africa's Twinstock coal group and about a fifth of its own equity. The exercise leaves Lonrho a world-sized coal producer and marks the end of its time as a sprawling conglomerate.

Anglo America, the South African mining group, and JCI, the minerals company, intended to promote black involvement in the mining industry, are Lonrho's partners in this asset-shuffling exercise. Anglo is giving most of its holding to JCI, in return for JCI's share in the Joel gold mine and its stake in platinum producer Amplats.

JCI will sell the Lonrho shares back to Lonrho for £176.7 million, and Lonrho will cancel them.

Lonrho will also buy Tavistock from JCI, for about £173 million, and combine it with its South African coal operation, Duiker.

CONTRACTORS check progress on the installation of emergency power cables into Auckland, New Zealand's biggest city, where the lights have been off for three weeks, writes Charlotte Denny.

Four 20-year-old power cables failed, closing the central business district.

The government has announced an inquiry, but residents and businesses are already demanding the resignation of the board of the privatised supply firm, Mercury, warned when it was a public corporation that the cables needed replacing. Mercury had to fly in engineers from

Australia to fix the cables because it had laid off its own specialists in cost-cutting. Emergency generators, including a ship moored in Auckland harbour, have kept essential services running, but businesses, which have lost millions in sales, are planning to sue.

Yesterday, as firms shut up shop after the first week of almost uninterrupted supply, Michael Barnett, head of the Auckland Chambers of Commerce, predicted that the long-term blow to confidence would be serious.

PHOTOGRAPH: ROSS LAND

Brown to keep a tight rein

Mark Atkinson and Charlotte Denny

GORDON Brown is set to maintain a tight grip on public spending in next week's Budget, with only minimal extra cash for priority areas, despite unveiling a sharp improvement in the public finances.

The Chancellor is expected to reduce his public borrowing forecast for the current financial year to around half the current level of \$9.5 billion, fuelling accusations that he is sitting on a pre-election war chest.

But, apart from giving an additional few hundred million pounds to health and education to tide them over until completion of the Government's comprehensive spend-

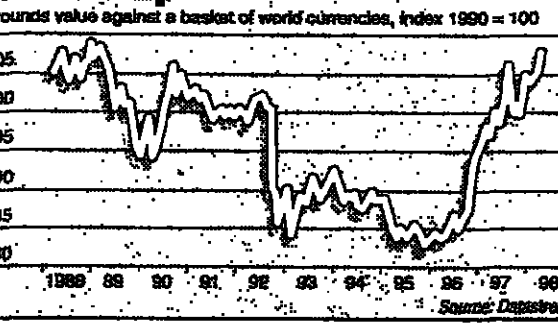
ing review in the summer, he will stress that the downward revision should not be seen as an excuse for loosening the Treasury's purse strings.

The improvement in the public finances this year is largely due to one-off factors, such as lower-than-expected borrowing by local authorities and public corporations, and Mr Brown is determined not to be diverted from implementing his tough five-year deficit reduction plan, designed to put the public finances on a sustainable long-term footing.

His forecasts for public borrowing in future years will remain more or less unchanged from November's pre-Budget report, which predicted a small surplus by the turn of the century.

Although substantial extra cash is likely to be found in the summer for education and

On the up



health, by switching money from other programmes, overall expenditure controls will remain stringent because of the need to reduce the national debt, which eats up more than \$24 billion a year in interest payments.

The Chancellor will shade down his GDP forecast for

this year from a range of 2.25-2.75 per cent to 2.5 per cent.

The range reflects uncertainty about the impact of the Asian financial crisis on UK exports and business confidence, as well as the improvement in the economy's performance that may result from the welfare to work pro-

gramme. Mr Brown is also still concerned about the dangers of an explosion in pay, which could force the Bank of England to increase interest rates again to restrain inflation. Higher interest rates would slow economic growth.

Mr Brown is expected to shade down his forecast for inflation this year from 3 per cent to about 2.75 per cent, again reflecting the deflationary impact of Asia.

But the crisis will not prevent a slight downward revision to the current account deficit for this year, which was predicted in November at \$7.25 billion.

This reflects an improved starting position last year when, despite the pound's strength, there was a bigger-than-expected trade and investment surplus of \$4.5 billion — the first for 12 years, according to the Office for

National Statistics. Yesterday's growth figures showed the economy expanded by 0.6 per cent in the last quarter of 1997, 0.2 percentage points above government statisticians' first estimate. The revision brings annual growth up to 2.9 per cent.

City analysts said yesterday that the new evidence could swing wavering members of the Bank's monetary policy committee into the camp of the hawks who favour another rise in rates.

"Pressure on the doves to grow some talons has increased," said Michael Dicks, UK economist at Lehman Brothers.

The GDP and balance of payments data sent sterling soaring to a 10-year high against a basket of major currencies. The pound closed at DM3.0399 against the German currency.

£200m deal to buy off Barings bondholders

Dan Atkinson

A NEAR-£200 million package to buy off holders of bonds issued by the collapsed Barings merchant bank was unveiled yesterday. The cash on offer includes substantial contributions from Dutch group ING, the new owner of Barings, and accountants Coopers & Lybrand, the former Barings auditors.

It is hoped the deal will end a barrage of litigation from the 1,000-odd bondholders, who faced losing their investments in the wake of Barings' 1995 collapse after suffering losses approaching \$1 billion at the hands of rogue trader Nick Leeson.

Some bondholders will get all their money back, some as little as 23.8 per cent. The offer could mean fortunes for speculators who picked up Barings bonds at a fraction of their face value.

Both bondholders and the courts will have to approve the package, which was put together by an informal referee body, the City Disputes Panel, chaired by a former Law Lord, Baron Templeman. However, it gives nothing

to holders of Barings' preference shares, who may be tempted to object on grounds that it treats them unfairly. All Barings' ordinary voting shares were held by the Barings Foundation.

Two sets of legal actions had been planned. Bondholders had been getting ready to sue the defunct Barings companies plus advisers to the bond issues, including Hoare Govett, BZW and Cazenove, while liquidators Ernst & Young had been looking to sue Coopers & Lybrand.

But the deal should end litigation and pay different amounts to the different classes of bondholders. Holders of 1994 floating-rate notes will receive full payment of both the principle and interest, minus a small deduction for expenses.

Holders of 1996 bonds will receive roughly 50 per cent of the principle, while holders of the 1994 "perpetual" notes will receive approximately 23.8 per cent.

Since the collapse, the perpetual notes have traded at less than 10 per cent of their

value, so the deal would give a handsome return.

Ernst said there could be an additional \$3 million available to holders of the 1996 bonds and the perpetual notes, depending on a settlement to be reached with the tax authorities in Singapore. It was here that Leeson launched his reckless gambles on derivatives markets. The 1994 floating-rate note holders are to get all their money back — \$150 million (\$90.5 million) — because the notes were the liability of a solvent Barings subsidiary. A further \$27 million is available from assets realised by the liquidators, leaving \$57 million to be found to pay the \$84.5 million owed to 1996 holders and \$25.5 million to the perpetual note holders.

That outstanding money has been made up of contributions from ING, Coopers and Deloitte. Coopers last night declined to quantify its contribution, although it is understood to have been substantial.

It is believed ING contributed because it would be good for the Barings name and would reduce ING's exposure to ongoing administrative costs for the liquidation.

Tesco embrace of union opens way to 'new era'

Seumas Milne Labour Editor

A PARTNERSHIP agreement between supermarket group Tesco and shopworkers' union Usdaw aimed at creating a "new era" of employee consultation and involvement was yesterday hailed by the Government as a milestone in its drive for greater co-operation in the workplace.

The deal, which will replace traditional union bargaining with a hierarchy of interlocking staff forums, covers all 150,000 employees at Tesco, the country's leading supermarket chain and the largest private employer of unionised labour.

The new arrangements, which were unveiled yesterday to Tesco staff and shop stewards, were seized on by TUC general secretary John Monks as "ending the myth" about trade unionism and signalling to employers that they have nothing to fear from the planned legal right to union recognition.

Ian McCartney, the trade and industry minister ne-

Sign here

Recent partnership agreements — trading flexibility for job security

Blue Circle: 3-year deal in 1997

United Distillers: extended to 1999

Rover: 3-year deal in 1997

Hydrex: Welsh Water and Swalec

Legal and General: signed 1997

gotiating his way through CBI and TUC demands over how that right should be implemented, said he was delighted with the Tesco-Usdaw deal, which showed that partnership was "at the heart of a successful and competitive business".

The goal of European-style "social partnership" is at the heart of TUC strategy, but most private-sector partnerships are agreements that have effectively boiled down to trading flexibility for job security.

The Usdaw deal with Tesco — an expanding business where redundancy is not an issue — is different.

For the company, Tesco's retail human resources director, Catherine Glickman, says it is about replacing adversarial and inflexible structures with better "two-way communication" to manage change.

The advantage for Usdaw, its general secretary Bill Connor believes, is that the union will be "at the centre of the business, rather than on the sidelines raising grievances". Usdaw will also get company co-operation with recruitment.

Formalised bargaining will be replaced with a system of consultative staff forums, elected by all employees, at the 588 Tesco stores, which will send union representatives to three regional forums.

They will elect a national negotiating forum, but the three 30-strong regional forums will have the final say on the company's annual pay offer.

The agreement is likely to come under fire from some Usdaw activists, who have in the past criticised the relationship between the union leadership and Tesco management as excessively cosy.

GUS buys US direct marketing business for £520 million

Roger Cowe

GREAT Universal Stores, which is in the middle of a \$1.6 billion takeover battle with Argos, agreed yesterday to pay \$520 million for a US direct marketing business, Metromail. The deal is the mail order giant's third large acquisition in the US since Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale took over as chairman from his cousin two years ago.

The spending spree will plunge the group into debt after years of sitting on a huge cash mountain. But GUS said yesterday it would be very comfortable with the level of debt. Metromail reported a loss last year of

nearly \$3 million (£1.8 million) because of one-off charges of \$37 million to cover acquisition costs and bad debts. In 1996 there was a profit of \$26.5 million.

The acquisition completes a marriage that was frustrated by GUS's acquisition of DMT. The two US companies had been talking about a possible merger before GUS stepped in, and negotiations were revived once DMT had been absorbed into the British mail order group.

Metromail's business is complementary to that of DMT. GUS's second US purchase, which was acquired last April. Both companies specialise in database technology and marketing.

Thomson to launch £1.3bn float

HOLIDAY giant Thomson will next week spell out details of a planned £1.3 billion flotation on the London Stock Exchange.

Canadian parent company Thomson Corporation will announce its intention on Wednesday to float off its British package travel subsidiary at the same time as it publishes its annual results in Toronto. The company is expected to issue a prospectus in the next three weeks and will sell a proportion of shares in Thomson Travel Group (TTG) in a public offering to small investors when it comes to the market in May. Staff may be offered the chance to buy shares at a discount price.

Thomson Corporation has

sold its UK regional newspaper interests but is still owner of Britain's leading package travel industry group. As well as market leader Thomson Holidays, Thomson Travel Group also owns high street travel agency giant Lunn Poly and the UK's largest charter airline Britannia Airways.

Paul Brett, chairman of TTG, and Charles Newbold, head of the international division, have been lobbying the Canadian-based board of directors since last autumn to float the group rather than search for a trade buyer.

TTG is expected to announce that it made pre-tax profits of more than £100 million last year, up from £83 million in 1996, bringing in revenues of

close to £1.5 billion from the sale of almost five million holidays. Thomson Holidays has been Britain's largest name in tour operating for the last 20 years and currently holds a 22 per cent market share, ahead of Air Tours and First Choice.

Second-placed group, Air Tours and third-largest First Choice are both already quoted stocks in London and the addition of Thomson will provide a welcome boost of prestige and

stability to this notoriously volatile sector.

Plans to float Thomson have accelerated after the Monopolies and Mergers Commission completed a lengthy probe into the holiday industry in December and concluded that it was "broadly competitive".

Thomson Corporation is expected to confirm that it is floating TTG in order to concentrate on its North American publishing interests.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS			
Australia 2.38	Germany 2.95	Malaysia 6.29	Singapore 2.53
Austria 20.72	Greece 467.21	Malta 0.64	South Africa 8.02
Belgium 60.70	Hong Kong 12.47	Netherlands 3.30	Spain 247.96
Canada 2.275	India 55.45	Norway 12.87	Sweden 12.95
Cyprus 0.682	Ireland 1.157	Portugal 20.54	Switzerland 2.385
Denmark 11.29	Israel 5.94	Saudi Arabia 6.10	Turkey 372.700
Finland 9.03	Italy 2.921		USA 1.62
France 9.86			

Supplied by NatWest (excluding rupee, shahel and rufiah)

FinanceGuardian

Railway safety sold down the profit line



The public would be horrified, say maintenance workers, at the state of the track under their speeding carriages

Make-do and mend on permanent way is putting passengers in danger, track workers tell KEITH HARPER

RAIL privatisation was supposed to give the public a revitalised and competitive industry, with investment doubled to £2 billion a year and services capable of upholding the proud boast of its new creators that they would turn it into the "best railway in the world".

But a disturbing picture of an infrastructure still starved of investment, with public safety stretched to the limit, is revealed today in a series of interviews with the men who patrol 11,000 miles of track that makes up Britain's crumbling railway system.

They perform many jobs, largely patching up faults and cracks, carrying out emergency repairs on a 24-hour basis, and laying new tracks. Without exception they all complain that had though some aspects of the job were under British Rail, under privatisation their work is often dictated by the commercial imperative of Railtrack and the train operating companies, who are constantly pressing them to cut corners to make sure the railway runs smoothly.

The names of the members of staff, who are employed by the track maintenance and renewal companies, once operated by BR, have been changed to prevent disciplinary action being taken against them.

Their geographical location has also been kept vague. They would almost certainly be sacked if they were identified. They are aged between 45 and 60, and each has spent more than 20 years in the industry. They are the rump of what is left of BR's skilled workforce.

Railtrack's own figures show that since 1994, the number of workers maintaining the network has fallen from 12,000 to 8,000.

Some have been supplemented by part-timers — scathingly referred to as "weekend cowboys" by the permanent staff — who are brought in at a moment's notice to carry out repair work for which many have had no experience. You do not have to take the

words of the interviewees to believe what is happening. Their concern has already been echoed in a warning against creeping commercialisation in the industry which has been expressed by Stan Robertson, chief inspector of railways. He is clearly worried that the private sector industry has been trying to do things on the cheap.

MR Robertson's concerns have been graphically followed up in a practical way by one of his senior colleagues.

His deputy, Vic Coleman, has just issued Railtrack with a stern edict that it urgently needs to make "greater efforts to ensure that deterioration in track conditions are properly identified and effectively remedied".

He says "standards are slipping" and Railtrack can no longer hide behind the excuse that it was bad under BR.

Railtrack's own investment plans have come under the close scrutiny of the rail regulator, John Swift. He has bluntly told its chairman, Sir Robert Horton, that he expects Railtrack to deliver "substantial improvements in the reliability of its infrastructure" and a much better performance.

Later this month the company will come under Mr Swift's microscope again as it sets out its new investment plans. The regulator is not likely to be satisfied with what he sees.

Railtrack has promised to invest £15 billion over the next 10 years, but Mr Swift poses a threat to their safety and those of the passengers.

towards reducing a £277 million shortfall and why, at a time that the railway inspectorate is breathing heavily down its neck, it wants to reduce its infrastructure spending by £80 million this year.

Within the next few months Railtrack could be exposed to a series of high profile, embarrassing prosecutions by the railway inspectorate for operating on unsafe track.

The inspectorate has already announced its intention to act over the derailment of a freight train at Bexley in Kent, where seven people were injured last year, and two further prosecutions are threatened.

The men on the track regard the 13 repair and maintenance companies with suspicion. They say they are working under severe constraints and that jobs are left for months, even though this poses a threat to their safety and those of the passengers.

Richard's story

'There's a steady deterioration'

RICHARD works north of London, and is responsible for 300 track miles. His depot has been cut from 60 to 31 people in four years.

"At least 50 per cent of the track is on its last legs. If it's not broken rails, it's broken components. If the public knew the full picture, it would be horrified. There are accidents waiting to happen and loads of speed restrictions. Some cowboy the other day forgot to put up a 20 mph restriction on a 70 mph route. How there wasn't an accident, I'll never know."

"Some things have improved — high visibility clothing and things like that. But some of these casual boys come on to the railway without a personal track certificate to say they're all right to do the job."

"Some companies come in with a loss-leader approach. They make a com-

plete cock-up and then Railtrack rightly pulls them up because they're cheap and nasty. But it costs money and time, and it's dangerous."

"Privatisation has led to a vicious circle. Railtrack instructs the main contractors to do the work. They pass it on and get a cheaper job done, and it leads to unsafe practices. There's a steady deterioration."

"I have a piece of track which should have been renewed five or six months ago."

"It's similar to what happened at Bexley last year when a freight train topped off a viaduct, injuring all those people. The fault on the track at Bexley had been discovered but it had not been put right."

"That's what has happened to me. We're inundated with so much work that the priority for this job has been reduced. It's fallen out of the system."

Peter's story

'We fly by the seat of our pants'

PETER works in the London commuter belt, where his depot has been reduced from 80 to 35 staff.

"It is more frightening on the railway these days. The message we get from our employer is, make sure the train moves, otherwise it hits the company's profitability if there is a hold-up while the work is done."

"If we are too concerned about safety, that stops the trains. Performance is the key thing so we are pressurised by Railtrack to keep the show on the road."

"Railtrack is really responsible for seeing that the work gets done properly, but my work has never been checked by Railtrack and, in my time, I have worked on some extremely

dodgy jobs that require proper inspection."

"It is up to the maintenance companies to do it, but they often sub-contract work to many fly-by-night operators. They bring in gangs of casuals in taxis and pay them £80 in hard cash for a shift."

"The state of the track is not good. We get many speed restrictions because there are cracks in the line. Another huge problem are 'wet beds', where the concrete sleepers under the track have worn away, and the track tends to bounce."

"My gut feeling is that we fly by the seat of our pants, and standards are lower. Companies are prepared to take more risks because Railtrack bullies them. And in turn, we get bullied."

Tony's story

'Railtrack is a joke'

TONY works in the north of England on both main and secondary trunk routes, where staff at his depot have been cut from 60 to 16.

"We're falling so far behind on renewals, that it's unbelievable. We've got fewer experienced staff and we have to rely on agency guys coming in at weekends or at night to help out."

"The same numbers may be employed overall, but these new guys don't know their arse from their elbow."

"The casuals don't get any training. They come in one day and you may never see them again. We get all the agro because we have to look after them, and in many cases have to end up doing the job."

"The only way to improve matters is to make sure that Railtrack takes full responsibility for main-

tenance. Railtrack is a joke. It is totally reliant on the maintenance companies and does not know what is going on."

"Railtrack is so plous. It wrings its hands and says that safety is paramount, yet it gets really nasty if we cannot do a job on time, usually because the time we get to do it is impossible."

"I took possession of the track the other day and was given seven different work-sites over five miles, all done by casual labour. I was supposed to check everything, but how could I carry out my job properly?"

"In our area, 40 per cent of the track needs replacing, but that won't happen for years."

"We've got enough serious work for at least two years, but a lot of it is constantly put back because of emergencies."

Belgium. It's slightly different.

Brussels is now a mere 2 hours 40 minutes away by Eurostar, making the Belgian capital an enjoyable daytrip. Prices start from as little as £69 return. Just call 0870 6000 712. And do something slightly different.

Brussels, February 1998.

EUROSTAR

*Subject to terms and conditions. Calls charged at national rate. All calls are monitored for quality.

Tracking the chaos

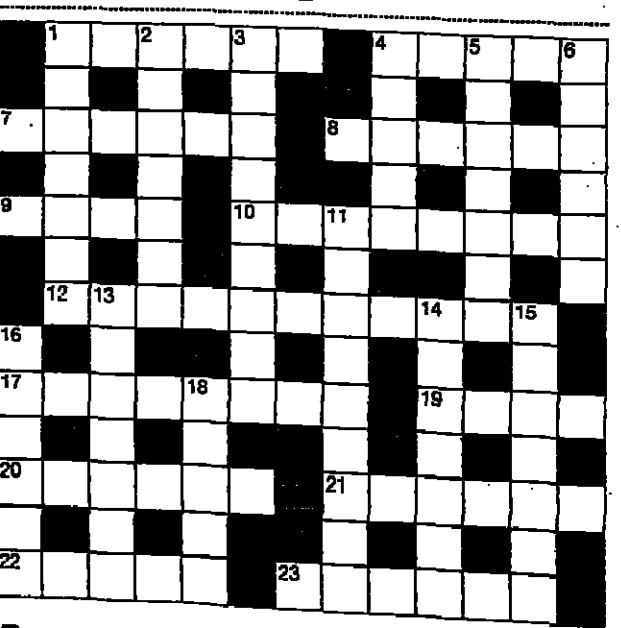
Reported train incidents in 60 days of last year

	July	
Cricklewood	20th	Derailed
Glen Douglas	24th	Derailed
Embsay & Crayke	25th	Bridge strike
Lea Hall	27th	Hitting obstruction
	August	
Harrow & Wealdstone	1st	Vehicle defect
Knolly	3rd	Derailed
Rangemore	11th	Level crossing
Neville Hill	11th	Collision
Androsan	12th	Near collision
Cardiff	14th	Vehicle defect
Goss Moor	22nd	Bridge strike
Greenford East	22nd	Derailed
	September	
Southall	18th	Collision — 7 dead
Longsight	19th	Collision
	October	
Gosport Oak	6th	Derailed

Quick Crossword No. 8695

FLASH IN THE PAN
A R O G O R T
D I S T A N T C U R I O U S
E R N E A C C I D E N T
S I B E R I A
P I C K L E D A N A N A
R E S I D E N T B O R N
M A I V E H U B B A R D
T F O U S D U
O N T E N T E R N O O K S

Solution No. 8694



- Across**
- Constellation (6)
 - Dog — unsteady perhaps? (7)
 - Cattle pen (6)
 - Ferocious (6)
 - Creep forward — a small distance (4)
 - Odd (6)
 - Acting — appearance (11)
 - Out-of-date (8)
 - Implement (4)
 - Famish (6)
 - Insect (6)
 - Stratum (5)
 - Filched (6)

- Down**
- Adult (5-2)
 - Wooden percussion instrument (9)
 - Goodbye (5)
 - Of the heart (7)
 - Dismal (6)
 - Able (9)
 - Rapture (7)
 - Unaffected (7)
 - Feeling (7)
 - Titbit (6)
 - Prize (5)

21 Stuck? Call our solutions line on 0891 338 248. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by AT5

the week

Saturday March 14 1998



McGee ... 'Take away the illegality of drugs and you take away their mystery, their sexiness, which in turn is their main allure. Why do 19-year-olds shun alcohol? Because it's legal and therefore boring'

PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD WEBB/REX

The head of Creation Records and the man who discovered Oasis, **Alan McGee**, knows a lot about drugs. Seven years of addiction to cocaine nearly killed him. So why is he calling for legalisation?

Cocaine supernova

WHEN Tony Blair came to power last May he presented himself as a prime minister in touch with the views of young people and determined to bring a more imaginative approach to the affairs of government. After 18 years of the Conservatives, how good that sounded. When I donated £50,000 to Labour before the election it was because I wanted to help him make that vision of a more creative Britain come true.

Ten months into the Labour Government, it hasn't panned out as hoped. This week the Government has come under fire for its policy on welfare-to-work, which I and many others in the music business fear will discourage young people from developing their talents by preventing them from drawing the dole.

There's a second area of government policy that will affect young people just as adversely. Drugs. Here is a government dedicated to a new, young country, yet it is following a drugs policy that was born

with prohibition in the 1920s (you used to be able to buy opium in Harrods, a fact that is largely forgotten). The Government's thinking is utterly rooted in the past: head in the sand, Christian, puritanical, taking the moral high ground.

It's all very well to preach loftily from the pulpit about the need to wage a war on illegal substances. You can condemn wicked drug-dealers and users to hard labour and proselytise about the evils of drugs until you are purple in the face. But the message doesn't fit the reality. A large proportion of the country — particularly the young — are taking drugs. No amount of sermonising will change that fact.

And yet anyone who has the temerity to talk about the reality of drugs is shouted down, as if they had broached a taboo subject. When Noel Gallagher said that taking drugs was "like getting up and having a cup of tea in the morning", he was panned. MPs demanded he should be prosecuted, while the Daily Mail claimed his words would have an

"appalling influence". It was as if he had said something blasphemous. It was the truth. For many people, taking drugs is like getting up and having a cup of tea in the morning. Fact.

Let me be clear: I do not want to encourage anybody to take drugs. I wish people didn't take drugs. I wish there were no such thing as drugs.

I feel I'm speaking from a position of strength about this subject. Unlike the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, who I assume has never smoked a joint in his life, I am a reformed drug addict. To be precise, I was up until four years ago, a cocaine addict and an alcoholic.

Jack Straw can preach to me about the dangers of drugs; but I know about the dangers from bitter personal experience. He can warn that alcohol withdrawal leads to the shakes and DTs: I know because I've been through them. He can say cocaine is a horrible, insidious drug. I know it is, because it destroyed my nervous system. If I knew then what I know now about it, I wouldn't have been snorting it up my nose with such abandon.

I nearly died. I was driven over the edge into a nervous breakdown. I partied excessively for seven years, then had to live with the consequences: a nine-month hangover.

Cannabis is in a different league from the one I inhabited. I've only smoked it four or five times in my life. If you consumed it non-stop for 17 years I'm sure it could bring on psychiatric illness; but spend a year in a pub drinking export-strength lager and that could have the same unpleasant result.

My weakness was for Ecstasy, cocaine and amphetamines. Towards the end of my addiction I delved into weird drugs like Night Nurse which I used to drink to help me sleep and for the slight buzz it gave me. I used to buy slimming drugs in America — a cheap form of speed — and take six of them to get off my head.

I couldn't put a figure to how many narcotics I swallowed or snorted in those seven years. Initially I used to buy a gram of cocaine at a time, graduating on to seven grams after I **page 14**

Belgium.
It's slightly different.



With on-bound connections to many Belgian cities for just £10, Belgium has never been so accessible or affordable. Prices start from as little as £79 return. Just call 0870 6000 712. And do something slightly different.

Belgium
February 1998

carstar

*Subject to terms and conditions. Calls charged at national rate. All calls are monitored for quality.

14 | THE WEEK

Healthy debate on the menu

IAN MAYES
OPEN
DOOR



LIKE PSMITH during his tenure at *Cosy Moments*, I feel moved to protest. We court criticism, but this is not abuse. The number of calls, complaints, queries, that I have dealt with as the Guardian readers editor is rapidly approaching 1,000, with nearly 400 of those ending up as items in the *Corrections and Clarifications* column.

The vast majority of calls come from readers who have noticed something amiss and who have written in a moderately amicable way to get it put right. A small number come from people who have themselves been injured by something in the Guardian and these, too, I have found in the circumstances to be quite surprisingly reasonable, calls in this category with or without the involvement of lawyers, are always given priority.

I have no brief to defend the Guardian against complaint. I have the more interesting job of pursuing legitimate, on behalf of the reader, saying, when appropriate, look, we seem to have got this wrong, how can we put it right? I have been accused — in reporting the principle that the paper has no interest in concealing its errors — of running the *Corrections and Clarifications* column with zero tolerance.

But there is a category of complaint which is much more difficult to deal with. These come not so much from Guardian readers as Guardian watchers who stand protectively over whole areas of interest and write, not to participate in a debate on the Letters page, but to complain that the whole article was intentionally misleading and should be corrected.

These letters have a number of common characteristics. They nearly always address matters of contentious opinion as though they were statements of fact. They appear to be written on the assumption that the journalist is an unprincipled rascal. And they are nearly always intimidatory, accompanied by warnings that a failure to recognise the complaint on all points, will result in a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission, or by remarks such as this, "If you continue to publish damaging inaccuracies, obvious questions about judgment and integrity will arise."

This last remark is from a letter by a reader, who appears to be the author of the Guardian in the hope of finding an article touching vegetarianism with which he can agree. On the last occasion

he complained that I forwarded a copy of his letter to the journalist who had written the offending piece. As he is required to do, he took the complaint seriously. He answered it directly to the complainant, with a copy to me. I then wrote to the complainant.

Receipt of the letter from the journalist left the complainant aghast. He rang me to ask whether it was normal practice to disclose the name and address of someone complaining to the journalist against whom the complaint is made (presumably because of the volatility of this area of debate). Well, yes, it is. But if someone asks us, with or without stating a reason, not to reveal their identity we respect that. So this week's complaint is refused, name, address and telephone of complainant under no circumstances to be disclosed to journalists, particularly the author of the article in question.

The article in question was a column by Joanna Blythman, which appeared on the Food & Drink pages of Guardian Weekend last Saturday under the heading, *Fig ignorant?* A selection from the 20 or so letters which this piece attracted is published in the letters column at the back of today's issue of Guardian Weekend. In my opinion this is the place to which the person who complained to the editor should have directed his letter. One of his main points is actually dealt with in today's Guardian Weekend letters.

This is what he says: "If a newspaper is to be a responsible purveyor of accurate information, then you will need to make a clear policy decision that the Guardian newspaper will not state, assume or imply that animal products are necessary. This will also mean informing Guardian staff of this decision and requiring that they seek competent sources when writing about these issues. I would assume that most journalists have access to telephones and public libraries, and can locate the various associations and organisations which provide factual information."

Joanna Blythman is a responsible writer who specialises in food journalism, contributing regularly to *Vegetarian Good Food* magazine among other journals, and the author of *The Food We Eat* (Michael Joseph), soon to appear in an expanded version from Penguin. She is entitled to her opinion, as those she quotes are entitled to theirs. The argument is a heated one, but I think it has been handled responsibly by Guardian Weekend and I see no reason to cry foul.

The quotation is from P.G. Wodehouse, *Pamphlet*, *Journalist*, 1915. It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Readers Editor, Ian Mayes, by telephoning 0171 238 9589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 238 9897. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk



THEME OF THE WEEK STATING THE OBVIOUS

Sometimes it helps to state the bleeding obvious. It's a handy way of getting the facts that you have to say. This week's selection focuses on the very obvious, and the obvious is, perhaps, the most obvious of all.

Joanna Blythman is a responsible writer who specialises in food journalism, contributing regularly to *Vegetarian Good Food* magazine among other journals, and the author of *The Food We Eat* (Michael Joseph), soon to appear in an expanded version from Penguin. She is entitled to her opinion, as those she quotes are entitled to theirs. The argument is a heated one, but I think it has been handled responsibly by Guardian Weekend and I see no reason to cry foul.

Quiz answers

- 1) Turn out the lights, leave their workplace and indulge themselves in two-and-a-half-hour lunch breaks.
- 2) It is the first published number aimed primarily at terrorists or subversives ready to turn double agent. It appeared in newspapers this week and is also available from Directory Enquiries.
- 3) The New Musical Express. A survey of leading pop musicians in NME revealed their discontent and disillusion with the government. "Good morning, Mr Blair, this is your wake-up call," said the editorial.
- 4) Water-aiders who have spent over the North Sea for almost 50 years are set to be banned next month by the Broadbent Authority.
- 5) The Conservative MP for Romney

The evening princess... Diana with a leopard's pattern for 1980... but what about the wife?

In his presentation of the television motorway, the *Princess* has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment.

No, I can't imagine. Let's say it to the *Princess*... The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment.

was convicted of polluting the water supply near his farm in Hampshire by illegally discharging 200,000 gallons of waste water from a slurry pit. 6) C — Trade Minister Ian McCartney who presiding the "milestone" debate on the national minimum wage. 7) Graham Elton, an inmate of Westland prison, who regularly communicates by letter with a cell to a lucrative advertising job after being sentenced last year to 21 months for fraud. 8) B — A 90-minute documentary for Channel 4 on "The Milestone" debate on the national minimum wage. 9) Women members. The Conservative Party voted by 577 to 391 in favour of extending female membership beyond its

rather different when it has been in power for 10 months. In the New Musical Express, the headline "Princess" is a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment.

Other people stated the obvious in the face, but continued to ignore it. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment.

for branding him boring, the *Princess* has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment.

drinking water source and contaminating the villages of Alton, Hampshire, to the south of the water-bottling plant. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment.

The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment. The evening princess, Diana, who was supposed to be the "Princess of the People", has been a bit of a disappointment.

How Do You Rate? 0-4 Las Las 5-8 Involuc 10-14 middlebrow 15 Wittgenstein

Awards of The Week

Candidate of The Week: "I'm vulgar. I'm a populist. But isn't that what the mayor should be?" Lord Archer on why he deserves to be Mayor of London.

Working mum of the week

Virginia Bottomley said she doesn't regret not spending more time with her children over the past 10 years. "I once said to them, 'Do you mind mummy working?' And there was this look of terror. Oh no, mummy's going to stay at home."

Feud of The Week

Names: Jerry Hayes. Occupation: Political columnist for *Punch*. Feud: Claimed that, after "one or two comments which were not exactly complimentary" on the Today programme in the 1980s, John Prescott "thumped me hard in the stomach" in the Members' Lobby that evening. He says: "I find it almost incomprehensible that John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, from Hull, has blown my charming little piece about our contretemps out of all proportion. Does the man have no sense of humour?"

Eligible bachelor of the week

"I'm just going to find a woman who hates me and give her £1 million — cut out the middle bit." Comic Jim Davidson, leaving court after agreeing his fourth divorce settlement.

Luvvie of The Week

"When I do Shakespeare," confessed Jane Asher, "I sometimes want to call out, 'Will, what the devil do you mean by this?'"

Cocaine supernova

page 13 became a millionaire and money was no object.

The point was that I was attracted to the mystery — the *Wally* — of the drug scene: sneaking into a cubicle in the gents and chipping out the gear on top of the toilet. There was the sense of expectation as you waited for the dealer to turn up. These were not nice cuddly people. I find it frightening now to think back on the enormous amounts of money circulating in the black economy in the hands of gangsters.

I've never taken heroin, which was my way of pretending to myself that I had no problem. I used to pat myself on the back and congratulate myself for not being a drug addict.

That's until the incident four years ago when I was met off a plane in America by a team of paramedics and put in hospital, pumped full of valium. After I was released I went straight back to it and parted again for the next two days. I ended up in the Cedars-Sinai Hospital, that famous institution where Hollywood stars end up when they reach the end of the road as I had done.

When you are in a bad way with drugs you retain a strange sanity even though you are off your head. So when I was surrounded by 17 paramedics and I was waiting for my blood pressure had climbed to 170 while another was putting an oxygen mask over my head, I remember quite clearly thinking, "This cannot be happening to me. This is not real. I am trapped in a bad B-movie. I can't turn the TV off! I'm in a fucking bad movie!"

There's a point at which most people who survive drugs snap. That's enough. There's no further to go. That's the point I had reached. At the time, I was recording *Give Out But Don't Give Up*, the fourth Primal Scream album. I survived my nervous breakdown. Others were not so lucky. Three of the band were on heroin, the manager was on heroin, an engineer had severe psychiatric problems

and disappeared for five years, and one of the producers died. That is about as dark as you can get.

So, please, no preaching, Mr Straw. Spare us, too, the platitudes of your so-called drugs tsar, Keith Hellawell, who announced in the Guardian last year, even before he was in the post, that there was to be no question of decriminalising cannabis or any other illegal substance. Talk about zero tolerance, the drugs tsar will make zero difference to the lives of people he is supposed to help, because he's fallen into that same old establishment habit of brushing the problem under the carpet.

THE hypocrisy in all this is astonishing. Every year, smoking kills 120,000 people in the UK, yet Labour accepts £1 million from Bernie Ecclestone (yes, they handed the money back, but not before they had to). One in 20 people in Britain is an alcoholic, but what do we hear about that? I don't wish to rope Jack Straw's son into this, because we all know he was set up. But come on — there's the Home Secretary mauling at us from on high, while his son works the local pub. Who is kidding whom?

Let's start again, and try and think imaginatively, constructively. For a start, let's acknowledge the scale of the problem. Illegal or no, 500,000 kids will take

Ecstasy this weekend. I may not like it and Jack Straw may not like it, but our views will not make a jot of difference.

Instead of talking down at them, we should be researching what Ecstasy does to them. We should be honest about its attractions, as well as its dangers.

Take away the illegality of drugs and you take away their mystery, their sexiness, which in turn is their main allure. Why do 19-year-old kids shun alcohol? Because it's legal and so they assume it's for boring old men.

Demystifying drugs would, of course, not stop everybody taking them, though I do believe a substantial number would drift away from the drugs scene. For 2,000 years, humans have been searching for artificially-induced oblivion — it's a natural human response.

For those who carry on consuming, they should be able to buy pure drugs, properly regulated, from the chemist. That way they would not die from the impurities that drugs are so often cut with. The state could also charge taxes which can be ploughed back into research on narcotics safety and into the National Health Service. Drugs would come with proper health warnings; you would be told not to take three grams of cocaine just as you are told not to take more than 12 paracetamol a day.

We should be providing young people with full information, and encouraging new treatments like

one of the methods Dr Colin Brewer, a leading psychiatric specialist on drug use, is developing at London's Stapleford Centre. He is using naltrexone implants which

block the impact of the opiate and therefore remove its buzz. Addicts can take as much as they like but it won't give them a high, so the desire for the drug quickly fades.

I have faith in Dr Brewer. He cured me, helping me through three months of alcohol and cocaine withdrawal. I owe my life to him. I just wish others as desperate as I was could be given the same chance to start again.

What do we do to most drug addicts? We slam them in prison, where there are far more drugs in circulation than in the outside world and where, we learnt this week, the drug barons are in control rather than the prison wardens.

I know people will accuse me of being naive, of being a fantasist: people always do when you try and suggest any positive change that might make an inroad into the damage caused by drugs. But I'm demoralised for this article, as Noel was, that reveals far more about our critics than it does about us. I know how drugs can damage a person. Approximately one day a month, I feel I cannot face the house or answer the phone. No one could want more than I do to protect people from suffering that.

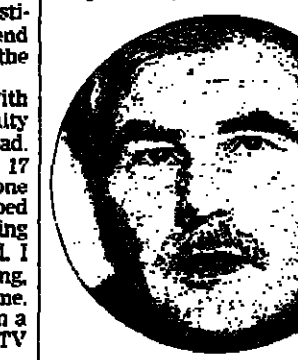
One last word. Young people do not start popping pills and snorting lines because of anything rock stars might say. Kids in housing

estates in Glasgow are doing drugs because they don't have hope. They are anathematising themselves against the bleakness of their futures.

That's why sending them out to dig a road or on some toilet-cleaning scheme on welfare-to-work is not the way to go. That's why dumping them in prison where their dependency on drugs only deepens is so counterproductive. Give them a chance to express themselves, to perform, to gain self-respect.

There is a sea change afoot. The debate can be heard, with marches planned and even the House of Lords planning an enquiry into the effects of cannabis. So come on, Mr Straw, it's not too late to turn back from the disastrous course on which you are set. I know that Labour genuinely wants to help people. Think big. Think creatively. Surprise us.

Alan McGee is organising a CD to be launched later this year in support of the legalise cannabis campaign, which will include artists such as Paul Weller, Hummel, Super Furry Animals, Travis and Cast.



Keith Hellawell, drugs tsar: 'Let us be clear about cannabis. It can give rise to acute mental disturbance, and be addictive.'



Jack Straw: 'We shall not decriminalise, legalise or legitimise the use of drugs.'



Tony Blair: 'I want to breathe new life into the battle against drugs. We will hit hard on drugs and the drugs trade.'



Noel Gallagher: 'Drugs is like getting up and having a cup of tea in the morning.'

Patrimony and Patricide in the Blair Camp

CLIPPING

CLIPPING

CLIPPING

CLIPPING

The Pythons are back 30 years after their debut. Michael Palin explains why he's gone full circle

Almost the full Monty



IN ASPEN, Colorado, last weekend, the five remaining members of the Monty Python team — Eric Idle, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones and Michael Palin — met on stage for the first time in 18 years. (Graham Chapman, who died of cancer in 1989, was present in an urn containing his "ashes" which later "spilt" on the carpet.) The reunion, organised by the American television company HBO as part of a comedy festival, wasn't quite what it seemed. They were due a business meeting, saw an opportunity for free first-class flights and accommodation, and grabbed it.

Palin in particular was enticed by the thought of some skiing. But something happened while they were there — the altitude, the fun of being together again, the pleasure of topping a bill that included Steve Martin, Eddie Izzard and the cast of *Cheers*. And before they knew it, they were announcing plans for a major tour to tie in with the 30th anniversary next year of the first Python series. Declaring their intention on the *Today* programme, John Cleese said they fully expected it to be a "resounding failure".

Back in London this week, Michael Palin for one looked a little sheepish. He even raised his eyes to the ceiling. "Nothing is firm," he said. "When John was doing *A Fish Called Wanda* and *Pierce Fennegans* he had no time for Python, now he's not doing anything he's got time. Same with me. I was all round the world, no time for Python, now I've got a bit more time. But Terry Gilliam may well be busy next year. And it has to be something that involves all of us. There's no Graham, and we can't start sort of cutting down to four, three, one." Watching some of the sketches again in Aspen made him "howl with laughter" — its "energy", "manic inventiveness" and "freshness". But he added that, "to me the thought of doing the *Dead Parrot* sketch for 13 weeks around the world's capitals is deadly".

Palin's relationship with Python is probably the most complicated of the five. Cleese was the one who left and although Palin is philosophical now ("he felt oppressed by it... there's no way you could do Python by being forced to do it"), there were years when he must have felt abandoned, stuck at home, watching his more famous colleague take off. It was Palin who, with Gilliam, secured the American rights to Python from the BBC after a legal battle with ABC, which didn't seem much at the time, but has proved extremely lucrative since. (The Python business earns each of them about £150,000 a year.) It is Palin who is said to keep in touch with each Python separately (he was with Chapman when he died; he plays squash with Jones). This week he was the only member of the team to be called as a witness in a copyright battle concerning *The Life of Brian*. "John was going to court. 'Oh no,' he said in mock horror. 'Not the nicest man in England appearing on our side. Oh how awful.'"

But you could understand if Palin felt like putting his head in the sand. The kids who come and knock on his door ("They say, 'Are you Michael Palin?' I say, 'No, I'm his brother. He's away on his travels.' 'Oh, OK,' they say and off they go.") know him for other things. He is not for his best-selling novel, *Hemlock*, or for his television and film roles (he is about to play a lecherous old man — "I like that," he said, rubbing his hands — in a Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan movie) but certainly for his three enormously successful BBC travel documentaries. His, it is said, are so huge they have to be authorised personally by the director general. The latest, *Full Circle*, a trip round the Pacific Rim (Idle suggested it be called *Palin's Rim*) has just received an award for best BBC show. He has plans for a series of films in the footsteps of Heming-



Michael Palin ... "To me, the thought of doing the *Dead Parrot* sketch for 13 weeks around the world's capitals is deadly"

PHOTOGRAPH: EAMONN MCCABE

way in Aspen, in the middle of the comedy festival, he was walking down the street with Gilliam and Jones and someone shouted: "Hi Michael. Love travelling the world with you." The others may not have enjoyed the moment as much as he. "I think we're probably all happier if each other's individual projects don't work," he said. "We tolerate success but it's so much more interesting when Pythons on their own foul it up."

Palin is 54 and lives in three railway workers' cottages, run together like carriages in Gospel Oak, just by Hampstead Heath. He has been married for 32 years to Helen, a former teacher now a bereavement counsellor. They have three children in their twenties. He talked in his study, a large room lined with thick pine bookshelves (travel guides, videos, novels) with a spiral staircase going up to a roof. He doesn't go up there very often because he gets shouted at. "Hello Michael," a builder on another house hollered when he popped his head out to have his photo taken. He's always going on in interviews about how he's never liked his looks ("large nose, small chest, saggy buttocks") but he is undeniably attractive, with his greying temples, crinkly smile and triangular eyes, which he rubs a lot. "Sorry I'm so smart," he said, gesturing to his grey slacks and Burlington socks, but he's the sort of person who always seems

'I want to watch the world. I don't want the world to watch me. My wife says: "Well, don't sign up for a 10-part series then"'

very relaxed in clothes. And out of them: I saw him once in a hotel in Morocco where he lay by a pool in tiny trunks, coolly oblivious to the coachload of British holiday-makers trying not to catch his eye.

In his writing and performing, whether as tortured teacher in *Bleasdale's* *GPH* or stuttering Kenneth in *A Fish Called Wanda*, Palin has become adept at suggesting a manic neuroticism beneath a bland exterior, but in life he has always presented a well-adjusted face to the world. His older sister committed suicide in 1967, and he has implied since that there is blame to be laid at the door of his (now deceased) father. But even this — "heart-searching" as he calls it dismissively — he is distanced from now.

"One of the problems about being well-known is you get asked about your parents and your family and your children and you only get the chance to give a thumbnail impression, and then it goes into the cuttings. So my father has become Mr Cantankerous and my mother was Mrs Wonderful. It's just an oversimplification. No one's always cantankerous and I didn't come from an unhappy home." And then he adds, "It was difficult, we had to be politic when my father was in a bad mood which he very frequently got into, but there were other times when we got on extremely well and I was as proud of my father as sons usually are. Also I do see bits of him in me and I prob-

ably do overcompensate by being terribly nice to everyone, because I know I have some of his quick temper and I do get intolerant and get quite ratty very quickly."

Even as we spoke, there was some evidence for this. "SHUT UP!" he suddenly shouted at the phone when it rang for the second time. "No, I'm NOT going to answer it." "This is madness," he spluttered when a fax started inching its way out of a machine at the other side of the room. He gets very angry with computers too. "They're written by people totally without imagination or communication skills whatsoever. You know it comes up 'Retry' and flashing on in red."

He has written cross letters to the papers over the years. "I don't write nearly enough," he says. "Every morning I want to write a letter about something. I get very irritated by things. I want to write letters to the council about conditions locally, I want to write to my MP the Government. But I never actually do. Is it worth it? They'll just carry on doing what they're doing. I'll do something myself."

Palin is good at being himself. It might be one reason why he is so hard to work out. He talks a lot (John Cleese once remarked that you can always tell where Michael has been because of all the donkey's head legs cluttering the place up) but he is ambivalent about so many things — Python, his parents, his work, his fame. "I want it both

ways," he said. "I love to be recognised in the sense that it shows people have seen your work but on the other hand I hate the invasion of privacy. I want to watch the world. I don't want the world to be watching me, though occasionally, when I say this, my wife gets exasperated and says, 'Well, don't sign up for a 10-part series when the camera is following you around the world if you don't want to be recognised!'"

He wants to impress upon you his ordinariness, but at the same time it seems that something in him rebels against it. He doesn't want to be known exactly what he wants and I'm good at playing the character that confuses him, and he's so funny when he's confused like that. It has just this minute occurred to me that that's why I may have always gravitated towards those characters because that is what used to give us the most pleasure in Python.

So here we are back at Python — where so many things in Palin's life seem to lead. Even, it turns out, the travelling that seemed like such a good escape. "We began *Full Circle* from a tiny island called Little Diomedé," he recounted. "It was about the most remote place I could find on the map to start our journey. It's right up there between Russia and Alaska, a tiny rocky island of about 180 Inuit Eskimos. They made available one of their whaleskin boats and, as we were leaving, another boat came alongside and I thought it was going to be some strange tradition, some Inuit farewell, but the man on it said: 'Excuse me, are you the guy from Monty Python And The Holy Grail?' They'd seen it the night before on satellite."

rather nerdy characters — people think they can dismiss them but in the end very often they are the people who cause things to happen and upset assumptions.

"And also I think part of it may have come from playing opposite John in Python. He's good at playing the rather bossy man who comes in knowing exactly what he wants and I'm good at playing the character that confuses him, and he's so funny when he's confused like that. It has just this minute occurred to me that that's why I may have always gravitated towards those characters because that is what used to give us the most pleasure in Python."

So here we are back at Python — where so many things in Palin's life seem to lead. Even, it turns out, the travelling that seemed like such a good escape. "We began *Full Circle* from a tiny island called Little Diomedé," he recounted. "It was about the most remote place I could find on the map to start our journey. It's right up there between Russia and Alaska, a tiny rocky island of about 180 Inuit Eskimos. They made available one of their whaleskin boats and, as we were leaving, another boat came alongside and I thought it was going to be some strange tradition, some Inuit farewell, but the man on it said: 'Excuse me, are you the guy from Monty Python And The Holy Grail?' They'd seen it the night before on satellite."



Patrimony and patricide in the Blair camp

WERE told that Derry Irvine is safe as Lord Chancellor for another five years at least, which makes him unique among Cabinet ministers. But it's hardly surprising. Tony Blair could not sack his old mentor and boss; it would be a form of patricide.

There is something very father-and-son about this whole Government. The other day I had lunch with someone who was at St Catherine's, Oxford, with Peter Mandelson. He said that from the beginning Mandy had always made himself useful to important men, essentially father figures. As president of his JCR he had helped tone down student demands on behalf of the Master, Alan Bullock, for whom he also carried out research work. Since then Mandelson has always had someone important to serve, most recently Tony Blair.

Alastair Campbell, likewise, likes to be attached to a powerful older man. In the early days of Mr Blair's leadership, Campbell and Mandelson used to have public

spats, bringing a strong whiff of sibling rivalry. And Gordon Brown's resentment of the fact that he failed to win the top job reminds one very much of the older brother, used to being the senior figure, finding himself wounding himself.

Personally I suspect that these essentially emotional bonds between the most important people in the Government could be harmful, as Mr Blair will discover if Granddaddy Irvine doesn't get his act together soon.

TWO big setbacks for Cool Britannia nonsense this week: various pop singers have rounded on the Government in *NME* magazine, and the Queen made it clear that she wants to keep the pomp of the State Opening instead of swapping it for something Conranny and minimalist. Quite right. Most rock groups come and go, rather like minor members of the royal family (whatever happened to Captain Mark Phillips? Or Kajagoogoo?) But over the years people like to hold on to a degree of majesty and

enjoy ludicrous, over-the-top costuming, as Sir Elton John proves every day. He has much in common with Her Majesty, including a strong sense of self-regard and a prickly relationship with Princess Di. Both perform essentially ceremonial roles, and both should demonstrate to Mr Blair that it's pointless to pin your hopes on fly-by-night fashions in art, music or design. Real queens last forever.

THE pre-match entertainment used to be an important part of football. Since most soccer games are fairly boring, the marching band beforehand was a useful reminder that there were even drearier entertainments than the one we were about to see. Years ago I watched a demonstration of police dog handling at Old Trafford. It over-ran, and as the teams ran out, the dog showing how to catch a fleeing burglar suddenly turned on Bobby Charlton, and tried to bite his arm. It was a wonderful moment, not because we had anything against our balding hero, but because it was so unexpected.

Now Sunderland have booked a chamber ensemble in tails to play selections from Prokofiev's *Romeo And Juliet* before next Saturday's home match. This cross-cultural fertilisation is excellent. It would be good to have a few of the lads from Sunderland kick the ball around at the Festival Hall before Joshua Bell comes on to do *The*

The dog showing how to catch a fleeing burglar suddenly turned on Bobby Charlton

Four Seasons. A demonstration of police dog handling would bring Strauss's dreary *Elektra* to life at the Colosseum, and most Harold Pinter plays would be improved by having a marching band on stage during the interval.

BEFORE you buy your lottery ticket today, remember that it is 14,000 times less likely you'll win

the jackpot than that the asteroid XF11 will wipe out all life on the planet. And that's not going to happen either. No wonder the lottery is called the stupid tax.

I STILL haven't seen *The Full Monty* or *Titanic* or even any recent films with claims to artistic quality, such as *The Ice Storm*. Like many fathers, the only films I see are for children. So I have watched *George Of The Jungle* (previously), *Jungle 2 Jungle* (likewise), *Space Jam* (unimaginably awful), *The Borrowers* (not bad at all, Babe, three times), *Flubber* (funny if formulaic) and *Bean*, which was the best of the lot by quite a wide margin.

Now the chairman of the company which made it has said, rather pompously that it was "out-rageous" for the film not to be honoured or even nominated for an honour. Yet Bean has already taken as much money at the box office worldwide as *The Full Monty*, and it has yet to open in Japan, where there is a manic Bean cult in place.

I don't think the critics are being snobs, just that they feel that some works deserve money rather than recognition. In the same way, it's unlikely that Dick Francis will ever win the Booker Prize, or that RL Stine's *Goosebumps* series will lift the Prix Goncourt. Let the others go crying all the way to the awards ceremony.

GOOD to see a really crummy advert in a crummy cause. Forest, the pro-smoking lobby, is running an ad showing a young man and woman naked, with the legend: "Don't let smoke be stripped of their rights." "Everything is wrong about this," "Stripped" revives a dead metaphor in a way that makes the message meaningless. We wonder why on earth they're naked. If they're planning a shag, then they're fortunate, not oppressed. And they're not even smoking, because their arms and hands are needed to cover their parts. "Oh, so that's why we should stick up for smokers!", as I cannot imagine one single person saying.

Out for the count

HEAD TO HEAD: SHOULD THE AGE OF CONSENT FOR GAYS BE LOWERED TO 16?



Yes
Nic Burke
Gay man, 17



No
William Oddie
Social commentator

Dear Nic Burke,

How succinctly and without the appearance of bigotry, can I defend my reasons for opposing the Government's plans to reduce the age of consent for male homosexuals to 16? How can I be against equality? My answer is that this is not an argument about equality because we are not comparing like with like.

This is a question not of morality but of biology. Homosexual acts are not what the human body is designed for. That in itself is not an argument against change. But the consequent medical results of a homosexual lifestyle are.

In one survey (published in the American Journal of Public Health), the life expectancy of male homosexuals was found to be around 30 years less than that of male heterosexuals. Aids is not the only cause of premature death; practising gays contract a list of other life-threatening conditions. Over a lifetime, three-quarters of male homosexuals will contract a sexually-transmitted disease. A gay man's chances of premature death are massively greater than those of a very heavy smoker. There are other strong arguments against early entry into the gay subculture. But on health grounds alone, there is surely an unanswerable case for saying that it should be legally discouraged before the age of 18.

Yours sincerely,
William Oddie

Dear William Oddie,

It is not true that gay men have a largely reduced age expectancy. The impact of Aids on the gay community has skewed the statistics. In fact, the survey to which you refer has been discredited by many prominent persons in the health-care field.

Aids is no longer an unknown disease, randomly attacking person after person. It has never been confined to the homosexual community and a greater number of heterosexuals are being infected worldwide. There is therefore no justification to say that this disease is the reason why homosexuals need to be discriminated against. With modern safer-sex education campaigns in the classrooms, on the streets and in the community,

every teenager knows that they must protect themselves when having intercourse. And by protection, they reduce, if not eliminate, the risks of STDs almost completely.

Homosexual acts are natural to a homosexual. I have never felt any urge to have intercourse with a female and I do not feel excitement at the sight of a naked woman. To me, that would be unnatural. I am gay and I have known this for at least five years (I am 17). Discrimination serves no useful purpose other than to make homosexual teenagers believe they are wrong to be honest about themselves. It cannot be argued as healthy or right to do this to teenagers.

Yours sincerely,
Nic Burke

Dear Nic,

I am afraid that you have been deceived. Not only about the survey I have quoted but, most grievously, in the belief that you can "reduce, if not eliminate the risks of STDs almost completely".

Studies show that "safer sex" gives protection against HIV only in about two-thirds of cases; the latex from which condoms are made has tiny holes which are hundreds of times bigger than the microscopic HIV virus. And there are other dangers that "safer sex" does not prevent. Viral infections include Hepatitis A and B and anal warts (present in about two-thirds of male gays) which are strongly associated with anal cancer. Non-viral infections include various forms of dysentery such as amoebiasis, shigella and giardiasis, plus gonorrhoea and infections of the urinary tract. A survey in the British Medical Journal found that most STDs have substantially increased since the Health of the Nation initiative, with its strong encouragement of "safer sex".

Then there are the emotional and psychological risks of life in the gay subculture. Alcohol and drug abuse are high. So are depression and suicide: 40 per cent of homosexuals have major depression (compared with 3 per cent of men generally).

I wish desperately that I could make things different for you: but wishful thinking does not change reality. Of course in the end you must have the liberty to choose your own way of life and be given the respect and toleration to which



Making an honest man... Gary Buxton, left, and Andrew Jarrett "married" while at university

you have a right. You personally have no doubts about your sexuality. But there are others less certain by the age of 16. I am simply arguing for a pause for thought.

Yours sincerely,
William

Dear William,

With regard to STDs, the evidence you are presenting as fact is actually fiction. Strong brands of condoms do not break; there are no holes in them to let HIV through. And all the diseases you mention could just as easily be caught by a 16-year-old heterosexual.

The "emotional and psychological" risks are just as high in the "gay world" as in the "heterosexual world". The only difference for a gay person being allowed into the gay world is that they will be accepted for being honest, rather than shunned and abused, which is what happens if they are forced to hide themselves in the heterosexual world.

Bullying and homophobic violence is now a day-to-day occurrence in schools. Gay teenagers will be made to feel awful and wrong to be truthful because the discriminatory age of consent gives the message that gay people are wrong to be who they are. I understand your concern to protect children but studies show that by the age of 16 a person's sexual orientation has been fixed. I don't detect any concern from you that these allegedly "confused"

teenagers may think they are heterosexual for a while, before accepting their true identity. The crux of the issue is that it is up to the individual to make the decision and have sex when they are ready. By making it illegal we are simply putting teenagers at risk.

Yours sincerely,
Nic

Dear Nic,

My facts are not invented: they come from reputable scientific journals. Condoms do rupture; a survey by a family planning clinic in Manchester found that "52 per cent of respondents had experienced bursting or slipping off in the previous six months". Latest data contain naturally occurring flaws; the editor of Rubber Chemistry and Technology (USA) states that it is "dangerous to those involved in Aids to suggest that condoms are intrinsically impervious to HIV". And gays are more prone to STDs because the return tears more easily than the vagina.

But I have a feeling that whatever I said, you would still not believe me. I can understand why you feel ready for the adult world but that does not mean you are. Sixteen is too young for such a step and not only heterosexuals think so: to quote the homosexual writer

Simon Blow, to begin gay sex "is a decision that a 16-year-old is rarely emotionally developed enough to make".

Yours sincerely,
William

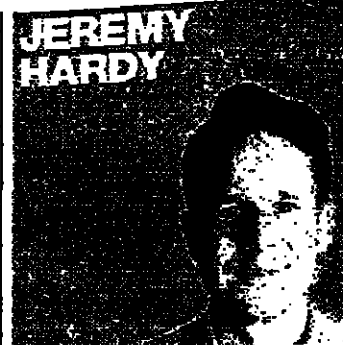
Dear William,

I must dispute your allegations that condoms split more often in gay men than in heterosexuals. The instances are the same when the correct brands of condoms are used. If the measures were not working then organisations such as the Government and World Health Organisation would not be promoting the use of condoms. In any case not all gay men have anal sex.

Sex will always involve risks but if heterosexual teenagers are seen as mature enough, and well-educated enough, to be able to understand and deal with those risks, then why are homosexuals not seen as mature enough to do the same at the same age?

Simon Blow has been misquoted: he advocates a high age of consent for everyone, not a discriminatory one which (according to children's groups such as the NSPCC) leads to homophobic bullying and abuse in schools. It is this bullying and abuse that leads many gay teenagers to try to kill themselves. You surely cannot suggest that leaving this discriminatory law in place is the healthy option and the one to protect our children?

Yours sincerely,
Nic



Never let the facts get in the way of a good story

I suppose it was inevitable. No sooner did Róisín McAliskey learn that she is not to be handed over to the Germans, than the backlash began. The culmination was BBC's Question Time on Thursday, during which David Dimbleby sat like a puddling as wild comments were hurled about, never once cautioning the audience that this woman has not been charged with anything.

The media has had lots to say but it's mostly been speculation about the peace process. Facts about the evidence have been scarce. When they have appeared, they have been prefaced by the words, "her supporters allege", which spares reporters the effort of research and creates the impression that televised interviews with eye-witnesses may exist only in their minds. Many journalists seem to take little interest in a story until it's finished. They then scratch around trying to find out just enough so they can comment.

The Home Office has created this climate by refusing to talk about the evidence. In a shameful, cowardly sop to our most illustrious European Union partner, the Home Office statement on Monday evening said there was no criticism of the German case and offered Róisín's health as the sole reason for stopping the extradition.

There is no doubt that, if there was a credible case against her, Róisín would be on her way to Germany. The Home Office has hidden behind medical reports to spare the feelings of the dominant power in Europe and to ensure that Róisín is forever the subject of suspicion. Despite the fact that extradition law obliges the Home Secretary to consider the evidence in a case, his junior, Alun Michael, consistently said that evidence was a matter for the German courts alone. So why does the Home Office now say that there was nothing wrong with the "quality" of the application? Having

her to be the woman seen in Germany and this fact is in the possession of the Home Secretary Hugo Young wrote in this paper on Thursday: "After painstaking investigation, enough evidence was gathered to persuade a magistrate that McAliskey should be extradited." Would not a painstaking investigation involve taking into account where she was in June 1996, or maybe giving her boss a ring?

Again, I don't know how many

times it has to be said but, under the European Convention on Extradition, there is no requirement for a *prima facie* case to be submitted to the committing hearing and a defence has no right to present evidence in their defence. The magistrate had no choice but to ratify the extradition. It is the role of the Home Secretary to consider evidence and rule on whether an extradition would be just. Had Straw ruled differently, his decision would have been the subject of judicial review and he would very probably have lost.

People have asked me about the timing of Straw's decision. In November he received medical reports saying that Róisín is too unwell to be extradited. These reports were written by those treating her but he saw fit to commission an "independent psychiatrist" to examine Róisín.

Presumably, he thought that the senior trauma specialists in Britain are in the pay of sequestrators. In any event, the independent psychiatrist was commissioned in November and started work in February.

The independent psychiatrist confirmed the existing reports and added his own view that Róisín would suffer irreparable breakdown if sent to Germany. His report, along with the hospital's final comments, was given to Jack Straw last weekend and his decision was announced on Monday. Beyond that I cannot explain the timing.

Hugo Young writes that Róisín is in "uncertain health". That is not true: she is certainly ill. That said, it would be possible to have a conversation with her and think

There is no doubt that if there was a credible case against her, Róisín would be on her way to Germany

she's fine. She is bright, warm, extremely funny and largely pre-occupied with the problems of her fellow patients. It is possible for someone to be mentally ill without looking like a member of the Ulster Unionist Party.

There is no mystery as to why she is ill. It is a tribute to her extraordinary courage that she seems as healthy as she does. Most people, if put through the things she's suffered, would be absolutely barking mad. As her mother said this week, if Britain wanted to build confidence among Irish nationalists, we would close down the Castlereagh Holding Centre. And one of Róisín's few long-term plans is to expose some of what is done to women inside Holloway Prison.

I am happy to be able to congratulate Róisín and her family on surviving their ordeal. I also congratulate her solicitor, Gareth Peirce, and commend Paul May, Martin Collins and Nick Brown of the Britain and Ireland Human Rights Centre. Other stalwart campaigners included Lin Solomon and Seth Linder. Journalists whose investigations uncovered vital flaws in the German case. So many other people all over the world have put in so much time and effort, that to list them would start to read like an acceptance speech. But I should finally like to thank the RUC and the German government for giving me the opportunity to get to know someone of whom I have become extremely fond.

NEW INTERNATIONALIST magazine

If you don't stand for something... you'll fall for anything

The Nestlé baby milk scandal: the appalling effect of neo-military sanctions on Iraq: Shell's role in the pollution of the Ogoniland region of Nigeria: arms sales to dictators - just some of the issues the New Internationalist magazine has taken a stand on over the last 25 years. But the NI is more than a shocking cover story. Every month we go behind the usual headline news to give you the real picture. Tackling issues like Green Energy or Hunger, we take the subject apart, examine the issues, and then reconstruct it so you have a clear understanding. Each magazine is beautifully designed and packed full of colour photos and charts so you can gradually build up a stunning library of information.

"The NI exists as a voice for those who are forgotten or ignored by the mass media"

The New Internationalist co-operative owes a great debt to all the subscribers who have supported it over the last 25 years. You have helped us keep reporting on news that wouldn't usually make the news.

If you've never seen the NI, don't you think it's about time you gave us a try? There's no risk: we will send you the next three months' issues FREE, plus a full-colour world map (A4/A5 format). All you need to keep whether or not you subscribe.

NI WEBSITE: <http://www.newint.org/>

Post to: New Internationalist, FREEPOST S2555, PO Box 79, Heston TW20 2YB

NO-RISK TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION
YES! Please send me my 3 free issues and free map. If I decide to cancel, I will write and tell you within 10 days of receiving my third issue. If I wish to continue, I need do nothing. Starting from the 1st of the following month, you will charge my account quarterly until cancelled. The NI subscription price (from £6.50).

DIRECT DEBIT INSTRUCTIONS - To any bank (excepting) I warrant you to pay direct debits as the issuing of NI Accounts are variable and may be debited on various dates. The NI may only change them after giving me prior notice. I will tell the bank in writing if I wish to cancel the instruction. If my direct debit is paid when the terms of the instruction have been altered, the NI will refund me.

Name (BLOCK LETTERS please) Bank/Building Society Account as the name of

Address Bank Address

Postcode Postcode

Account Number

Sort code

Signature Date

Authorisation to use NI's name and logo for promotional purposes only. NI will not be held responsible for any misuse of NI's name and logo. NI will not be held responsible for any misuse of NI's name and logo. NI will not be held responsible for any misuse of NI's name and logo.

25 years and still going strong

SMALLWEED



THE BISHOP of Rochester, Michael Nazir-Ah, warned Tony Blair this week that traditional practices of the church he may be aspiring to join. In times, the bishop warned in the Times, gives little attention to the democratic principles of counsel and consent. Church government remains firmly in the hands of the Vatican, and to a much lesser extent with the bishops. Mere clergy and lay people are not encouraged to open their mouths on such controversial issues as celibacy or the ordination of women. Their duty is to honour papal prescription. And so on. Unless the bishop is trying his hand at political satire, this all seems rather peculiar. The rules of the Catholic Church as here described seem to Smallweed

all too closely in line with the kind of oligocratic system so close to the hearts of some Blairites. For the clergy and laity read party conference, whom they seek to transform from a starchy conglomeration of obedient and obedient into a kind of loyalist rally, cheering the party leader in front of the TV cameras. For the bishops, read those members of Cabinet outside the inner sanctum; for the Vatican, read the secretariat of state. If Blair converts to the Catholic Church within the next week, I shall automatically assume that the most persuasive agent of change was the Bishop of Rochester.

MORE ASSAULTS this week on that tattered punchbag, the Nanny State. Some flag-ridden buffoon from the industry interviewed on the Today programme counselled the Government against action on passive smoking, on the grounds that people were sick and tired of the Nanny State interfering. Yet if nannies are people who protect small children from being clogged and choked and in some cases killed by the fumes exuded by smokers, I imagine most people would say they were doing the state some service. More power to nannies! I say. Within reason, of course.

AND NOW, as February's flydye abates, and the great puce gales of March ravage the shuddering fens, it is time to resume Smallweed's exploration of People Everyone Should Know About But I Don't. This time I sink my ageing fangs into the corpulent form of the mystic and occultist Madame Blavatsky, one of the founders of Theosophy. Also a regular communicant with the spirit world, though by methods which failed to satisfy the rigorous requirements of the Society for Psychical Research. Whereas Gerard de Nerval, whom I also hope to get round to one day, led a lobster on a lead through the streets of Paris, Madame B—born Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, in 1831—kept a stuffed baboon in a morning suit in her New York apartment, tucking a copy of The Origin of the Species under its arm as some oblique kind of insult to Darwin. Nowadays references to her in the press, of which there are more than one might have expected, tend to write her off as some kind of overwight shyster; but at the time, Yeats and Conan Doyle were among those impressed. Smallweed alternates between being ashamed at knowing so little and wondering why he knows the name of the lady at all. At first he blamed TS Eliot, and she does seem to have been

the model for Madame Sosostris, the famous clairvoyant, in The Waste Land. But it may have more to do with Louis MacNeice, whose wonderful poem Bagpipe Music contains the couplet: "It's no good the something-or-other", it's no go Blavatsky; all we want is a packet of fags and a bit of a skirt in a taxi." It was frightfully exciting then to read such words at 16, though I'm sure it wouldn't be now.

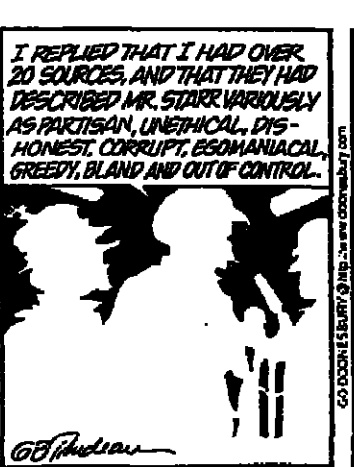
I THOUGHT readers might wish to know that the Surrey Senior cup match the other day, Woking FC launched into the world of football a player called Dante Alighieri.

AS ANY government setting its sights on modernising the country was bound to do, Tony's lot intends to cave back the kind of flummery which assumes that a new session of Parliament cannot open unless a man in a wig with some title like Lord High, Nicompoop, carrying a 15th century shoe horn and a morocco-bound edition of the poems of Rudyard Kipling, is at some stage forced to walk backwards. (I may have got the details of the occasion slightly wrong, but the real ones are hardly less ludicrous.) You'd have thought that young Hague, who also has modernising intentions, would have applauded. But happily his

shadow leader of the Commons, Gillian Shepherd, is that much older and wiser. She defends these practices, alleging that they're the custom of all countries around the world. And she Smallweed found in his travels abroad this week. She may have a point. In Mail on Monday, for instance, I found grown men, quite adult, openly weeping in gutters over the fact that not one of their parliamentarian economies embraces a Cap of Maintenance. In Togo on Tuesday, I was pestered by pedestrians who were troubled that their country's economy would never revive until they acquired an Arundel Herald Extraordinary. While in Wisconsin on Wednesday, the hotel clerk's very first question as I signed the register was whether I knew the meaning of "rules." I had to admit that I didn't. The poor chap blushed incoherently until I banished his tears with a promise to send him a life-size statue of Derry Irvine. If anyone has such an object and is ready to give it away for this Noble Cause, please let me know.

"Not, of course, MacNeice's exact words: it's a while since I read this poem, and the words here replaced by 'something-or-other' are lost in the flydye of time."

Doonesbury



THE BEST OF MY WEEK...

SAYS THE NEW BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL, REV JAMES JONES: "Was after the press conference to announce my appointment. My wife Sarah and I entered the cathedral to be met by the Dean. The vast and majestic space was a cool and dwarfing antidote to the flattering attention of the media. The Dean's welcome and the staff dispelled the nervous tension that had built up since getting the letter of appointment from Tony Blair."

Gripped by a feeding frenzy from the grapes of froth

Claire Longrigg sees the hand of a PR maestro behind the sudden rise of Major minor's new love



Bimbonic plague ... Emma Noble (right), star of this week's tabloids, shares a publicist with Melinda Messenger (left)

Think back a week ago. HarperCollins apologised to Chris Patten. Liam Gallagher was charged with breaking a fan's nose. And you had never heard of Emma Noble. Since then, the blonde, crop-haired 28-year-old model has been everywhere, splashed across the national press, wearing very little but a well-connected trophy male.

On Tuesday, the Daily Mail, the Mirror, the Sun, the Express, the Star and the Daily Telegraph carried pictures of Emma Noble, her eyes closed in romantic bliss as the former prime minister's son James Major nuzzled her neck with a hand on her leg.

On Wednesday, all the tabloids as well as two broadsheets carried pictures of the couple. It did not stop there. On Thursday and Friday, national papers were

still pumping out her image. Last night, she was on her way to make a celebrity appearance on Chris Evans's TFI Friday.

It's amazing what can be done with a little judicious marketing. Young model does a few ads, makes appearances in TV dramas, Cold Lazarus and Jonathan Creek and hares her legs weekly as a hostess on the Price Is Right. One high-profile snog and hey presto, a TV personality is born.

James Major is only 23 but already known for his devastating effect on women. (Just like his father, says uncle Terry. Sadly, we only have his word for it.) He was cited as co-respondent in previous girlfriend Elaine Jordache's divorce.

After a rather dull start as a management trainee at Marks & Spencer, Major Jr decided to go into marketing and got a job

representing the Café Royal. Invite photogenic girlfriend in very short skirt and outfit, market saturation achieved in a stroke of her silken thigh.

He says he is in love. We say they are young, media savvy, ambitious types. Nobody really cares, as long as they keep posing for the pictures. The man widely credited with the publicity surrounding the couple is Neil Reading, Emma Noble's manager and head of his own PR company. He was unavailable for comment yesterday, too busy steering a safe course for his client between the drooling jaws of the press.

But Max Clifford was full of praise. "If Neil's responsible for this, he's done a good job. This story's a great credit to him. He's entering the premier league — and there's plenty of room."

According to fellow PRs, such high-profile liaisons are becoming a standard part of the new celebrity's trajectory. The trick, apparently, is to spread the net wide enough to benefit as many parties as possible. "It's wonderful publicity for her and it's not going to do him any harm," adds Clifford. "He's also working for a club so he's got them plenty of publicity. It's a threesome: there are three winners."

Clifford does not see this style of launch for a TV star as anything new or unusual. "It's always been like that, especially for people who don't have a private life: they have one created for them. It's like David Copperfield and Claudia Schiffer. David came to me and asked me to launch him in Europe. All I know is that the

two of them met and fell in love around the same time I got involved in the project. Claudia Schiffer was a tremendous benefit to his career.

"It doesn't matter at all that people say it's manufactured. Some people enjoy the pictures of Emma Noble showing everything but her tassets; others will like reading about the former prime minister's son. Meanwhile the Café Royal's achieved hundreds of pounds worth of publicity with the message that if you go there, you'll meet someone tasty like Emma Noble."

Neil Reading is the new kid on the block. He represents Melinda Messenger and top comedians Jack Dee, Ben Elton and others. After a spell at Beer Davies Publicity, where he represented controversial clients like Viz magazine and Channel 4's The

Word, and less controversial clients like Hello! magazine, he left and set up his own company. He was just 22. As a US-style personal PR, he sees his job as media management. And the media, as this week shows, is perfectly happy to be managed.

Max Clifford, who invented personal PR in this country, is finally making room for some young pretenders. The latest arrival, Kizzi Nkwocha, who now represents multiple mother Mandy Allwood, says the launch of the celebrity relationship cum showbiz career is not a new phenomenon.

"People in showbusiness often go for these relationships of convenience. Everybody gets something out of it. I'm not saying it is manufactured but Emma Noble's done very very well out of this relationship,

she's been in every paper for the last four days, as well as a couple of TV appearances."

The tabloids are the key. Readership is now so huge and voracious, that a good run in the tabs, such as Emma Noble's legs have enjoyed every day this week, can make a major impact.

"This kind of marketing is what makes stars — now more than ever," says Kizzi. "Bonds like the Spice Girls get 80 per cent of their success from good marketing, and continual appearances in the Sun and the News of the World. Someone rang me 15 minutes ago saying 'I want to be someone.' That's all very well, but you've got to have some sort of substantial talent to sustain the public interest."

Of course, of course. Emma Noble is a very talented actress. Repeat after me.



Cases in contention

The remains of Yves Montand, right, French singer and singer, were exhumed this week to test whether Andre Dreyfus, left, is the father of an affair he had with his mother in the 1970s.

Andre Dreyfus, the art historian, right, who owned a £200 million estate in Florence, may be exhumed after 70-year-old Jean Dreyfus, left, claimed to be his illegitimate child of his father and his secretary.

Louise Woodward, left, is talking of exhuming the body of baby Matthew Spence, right, for her appeal to prove that he died of an old illness. Matthew's parents are suspected of the crime.

Enough to raise the dead

No wonder Frances Feeley, above, is smiling. She inherited £500,000 after a DNA test proved a link to her long-dead father. In the week when Yves Montand was exhumed, **Rory Carroll** asks whether the current craze for opening graves is digging up treasure or trouble

It's very quiet six feet under ground. Blackness all around. This is the end, death, the great full stop. The first thud sounds distant. So does the second and the third, but pretty soon it's a mechanical roar as earth spurts skywards to make room for the drill.

Blades slide under the coffin lid and hack at the hinges. A splintering noise and the lid flies open. Gloved hands descend. Welcome back to the land of the living.

There are a lot of exhumations about these days. This week you could hardly move for them. Yves Montand was brought back up for the sake of a paternity suit, the same day that the family of James Hanratty, hanged in 1961 for the A6 murder, wrestled with the idea of exhuming his innocence or otherwise.

A few days before that, Dr Sam Sheppard, the real-life Fugitive, was declared innocent after DNA

tests on his exhumed remains. And across the world the list goes on, like a role-call of figures from history. In Italy Benito Mussolini may be dug up in the pursuit of a paternity suit, as may the composer Giacomo Puccini and the art historian Sir Harold Acton, whose £40 million estate in Florence is at stake.

The late president of Argentina, Juan Peron, is also pending exhumation under a Buenos Aires court order initiated by Marta Holgado, who claims to be his natural daughter.

So what lies behind this morbid new fashion? Three letters: DNA. Science has raced ahead over the past few decades, unravelling our genetic make-up, and twisting and turning the knowledge into previously undreamed-of applications. A scrap of skin can be matched to its owner with just a one in 6 million chance of error, opening up a brave new world where we can unlock the secrets of the past.

But as is so often the case (remember Dolly the sheep?) science has outpaced morality. Bodies cannot be dug up to be prodded and peeled without prompting a basic question: is it ethical?

There's that familiar smell of money here, of course. Parties in paternity suits can stand to win multi-million pound estates, or a place in history as the relative of someone famous. The temptation to dig up bodies intensifies as each technological advance promises to reveal more. The dead won't shout "Stop!" This week the living did.

"It's horrible. This poor old man. They're actually taking him out of his box to slice him up," wailed Catherine Allegret, adopted daughter of the late Yves Montand, when drilling began at his grave on the orders of a Paris court investigating a paternity suit.

The exhumation of an icon for a posthumous DNA test outraged the public and disturbed Jean-

Pierre Changeux, head of the national ethics committee, who said genetic testing without prior consent set a dangerous precedent.

Joining such a posthumous struggle would have been the last thing on Sam Kerland's mind as his tractor clanked along the narrow lanes of wartime County Tyrone on his way to Emily Crichton's house. Last month a High Court judge in Belfast ruled that Frances Feeley, aged 55, was the late bachelor's illegitimate daughter and entitled to inherit his £500,000 estate near Tullyhogue.

Both Kerland and Crichton were exhumed for DNA samples. "It was a very distressing decision but one I had to make," Feeley says. "I was only told he was my father after he died and there seemed no other way."

Feeley could not face attending either exhumation. That is understandable, as they are grim affairs. Hector McInnes knew that last year even before police officers in thin fluorescent yellow jackets stamped their feet for warmth and entered the white plastic walls of the tent that surrounded his brother's grave.

A pneumatic drill broke the frozen topsoil as workmen crunched over the lime scattered to kill bacteria and climbed into the hole that contained John Irvine McInnes, suspected of being Bible John, the Lanarkshire man blamed for murdering three women in Edinburgh in the late 1960s.

It wasn't him. Forensic laboratories in Strathclyde, Berlin and Cambridge University failed to

match DNA from McInnes's thigh bone to semen or hair found on one of the victims. But by then the McInnes family had been violated. Twice. First was the violation of the grave, then of the relatives' good name, when for five months newspapers raked over their upbringing to explain John McInnes's crime, before quietly accepting he was innocent. "We went through a horrendous time. That's all I want to say," Hector said.

Not only are exhumed bodies often crawling with bugs, it is the bugs that can be the focus of forensic attention. "Flies in general are extremely adept at getting to bodies. They will burrow into the soil to eat the flesh of the body, muscle mostly because they're concerned with getting protein," says Zakaria Erzinclolu, a forensic entomologist who has testified at murder trials.

The type of bug and decomposition can tell a lot about the time and nature of death, which must then be given as evidence. "It can be very distressing for parents when you're talking about their little girl being maggotty," says Erzinclolu. "Once a barrister asked me if I could use another word, so I said larva. But you have to give straight answers to questions."

Decomposition is natural but the aversion of the living is instinctive. That's why so many cultures bury people and why digging them up, whatever the reason, is so distressing, even for the professionals. Some of the archaeologists who excavated 18th and 19th century crypts at Christ

Church Cathedral in London's Spitalfields in the early 1980s were traumatised by what they found. "Around 60 of the 1,000 skeletons had surviving soft tissue. That was a first for British archaeology to deal with. They were recognisable and had their own clothes," says team member Margaret Cox.

Adipocere, the rotting soft tissue, turned their stomachs, but more distressing was the realisation that what fell out of the coffins were not historical relics but human beings.

"With a 2,000-year-old skeleton you treat it with respect, but it's less like a person. At Spitalfields they had their names on the coffins. They were much more human, they could have been your own daughter or son," says Cox. The emotional response of the diggers, many of whom vowed never again to exhume a recent ly-buried corpse, will be published next month by the Council for British Archaeology in a book, *Grave Concerns*.

The sense of unease is heightened by the dubious motives that appear to lie behind many recent exhumations.

Louise Woodward's lawyers are accused of brinkmanship by talking of exhuming Matthew Spence, the toddler who died in her care.

In the town of Granbury, Texas, local officials clashed with their equivalent in Kearney, Missouri, over the true resting place — and the tourist money it would bring — of outlaw Jesse James. Kearney won.

Yet you don't have to be a suspected criminal or suspected father or suspected anything — to be at risk of exhumation. Being buried in Britain is far less permanent than people think.

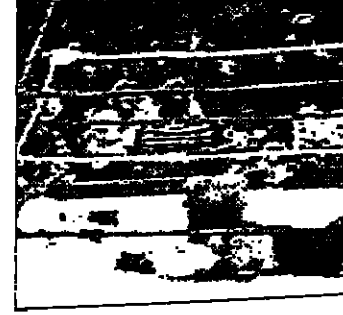
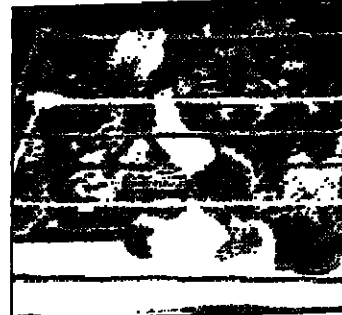
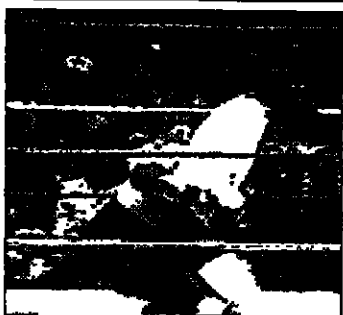
Exhumations of former burial grounds is a continual process in larger cities, to free land for commercial, residential and transport developments. Sheffield's super-trams run through land that was once part of the cathedral churchyard. London's Butlers Wharf, near Tower Bridge, is built on reclaimed burial land.

The Necropolis company has exhumed more than 100,000 bodies since 1980. Last year it made way for a leisure centre and shops in Islington, north London, by removing 15,000 corpses from 19th century graves and emptying them into 45 mass graves at Islington's municipal cemetery in Trent Park, Hertfordshire.

Removal trucks shunting bodies to and fro violate the cherished notion of a one-and-only final journey. Their cargo won't object. It's left to the living to decide whether it's right.

THE BEST OF MY WEEK...

arts



Andy Kaufman spent his short life blurring the boundaries between comedy and reality. Was he joking when he made the cast and crew of a television show beat him up? Was he acting when he fought a professional wrestler and damaged his spine? **Jonathan Jones** tells the story of America's most dangerous TV comic

Only when I laugh

Andy Kaufman was 35 when he died of a rare form of lung cancer. But he lives on as a half-believed story of mayhem and madness. His death was a shock, people say. Like his hero Elvis, he is living on an island somewhere, laughing at the world. If you have a long memory or cable television, you will remember Kaufman as Latka from the sitcom *Taxi*. Latka was the east-European mechanic whose uncomprehending eagerness would drive Danny DeVito's axxy cab-controller into a fury. But the sweet innocence Kaufman brought to the role was misleading: until his death, in 1984, Kaufman was the most dangerous comedian on American television. The story of his life is the story of a man who refused to recognise the boundaries between art and life.

In 1992, REM addressed their song *Man On The Moon* to Kaufman, rekindling America's memory of a lost genius. Now Miles Forman is to direct a biopic of him, *Man In The Moon*, and this week Jim Carrey played Tom Hanks and Nicolas Cage to the lead role. The script was written by Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski, who wrote Forman's film about the porn king Larry Flynt, as well as Tim Burton's paean to Ed Wood, *Man In The Moon* is being made by Jersey Films, the company founded by Danny DeVito.

Stories about Andy Kaufman always lead to other, more startling layers of comedy rather than any "real" self. In Nashville, Tennessee, Jerry Lawler, the former Southern Heavyweight Wrestling Champion who once put Kaufman in a neck-brace, told me: "That's one of the first things I learned about Andy: that he would not take the mask off to anyone."

Yet people who knew Kaufman express deep affection. He was born in New York in 1949 and grew up in Long Island. He remembered sitting in his bedroom as a child imagining there was a TV camera in the wall. By adolescence all his enthusiasms were formed. He played the congas, worshipped Elvis and loved wrestlers, especially the villainous ones.

At 16 he completed his first novel, *The Hollering Mango*, which was followed by two more unpublished efforts. His desire to write the Great American Novel shaped one of his most heroic routines. In 1971, after an apprenticeship in Long Island clubs, he was invited to perform at the Improv in New York. He would walk onto the stage carrying a book and read aloud from *The Great Gatsby* for 45 minutes.

Andy said his act wasn't comedy but "living theatre". The performance artist Laurie Anderson met him at a club in Queens, in her memoir, *Stories From The Nerve Bible*, she relates how his routine started "with Andy playing the bongos, and for some unknown reason,

sobbing". She became his friend and accomplice, going on field trips to the Coney Island funfair. They watched men impress their girlfriends on the Test-your-Strength machine, Andy sneering loudly at their efforts and Laurie begging him to win her a bunny. He walked up to the machine, brought down the hammer, and the machine read "Weakling". He ranted and raved that it was fixed. They went on the Rotowheel, the swirling chamber that pins passengers to its sides as it spins. When everyone had been shut inside facing each other and the ride was about to begin, Kaufman started to cry. "Let me out! We're all going to die!"

Kaufman adopted the identity of Foreign Man, an east European immigrant making a hopeless attempt at stand-up comedy. He seemed lost, staring at the audience as his jokes fell flat. They had no idea whether to laugh or to feel sorry for him. Then Foreign Man said: "And now, last, but not to be the least, I would like to imitate the Elvis Presley." He was transformed from stumbling outsider to ultimate insider, a wired and uncannily spot-on Elvis, the only impersonator that won Presley's approval.

When Foreign Man became Latka, Kaufman needed a new persona to unsettle live audiences. He claimed to have met the four-mouthed and fictional lounge singer Tony Clifton in Las Vegas. Clifton was a monster, physically and spiritually, who insulted the audience in a rasping voice. Kaufman negotiated a contract for "Clifton" to act in *Taxi*, but when he turned up for filming his behaviour was so vile he was fired on the spot. Dragged away by studio guards he shouted: "I'll sue all your fucking asses! You'll never work in Vegas again!"

On another occasion, Kaufman destroyed a live comedy show by staging a breakdown which provoked cast and crew to beat him up. Viewers of *Saturday Night Live* voted to exclude him from the show in a poll he had secretly arranged himself. He once appeared on Letterman to introduce his newly adopted family. Three bored young black men ambled onto the set. One sat on Andy's knee.

But it was wrestling that provided Kaufman with his richest ready-made theatre. He was so in love with its mixture of performance and pain that he decided to become a wrestler — with a twist: Kaufman wrestled women. In 1979 he proclaimed himself the world's first Inter-Gender Wrestling Champion. He stood on stage and abused women, saying he wouldn't respect them until they wrestled him for a \$500 prize. "When I do the wrestling act, I'm playing the villain," Kaufman said in comedy clubs wasn't convincing enough to achieve this.

"Andy always felt he didn't get the response from comedy audiences that he wanted from the



Kaufman with Danny DeVito in *Taxi*, above. Top: his wrestling bout with Jerry Lawler. He left in an ambulance

wrestling," recalls Jerry Lawler. He approached the New York wrestling federation, who were suspicious of endorsing fights between men and women, but Lawler and his promoters were more enthusiastic.

"We brought Andy down to Memphis strictly with the intention of wrestling women," he said. "He wanted to go on TV and make his name. He was trying to run out of the ring and she would grab him and pick him up again."

After two minutes she "got cotton mouth" from nervousness, and Kaufman pinned her to the ground.

When he entered the ring at the Mid-South Coliseum, an audience of 11,000 was howling for his blood. He fought five women and best the first four, but the last, "a 117 black lady named Foxy", gave him a surprise. "She grabbed Andy, picked him up in the air and body-slammed him," Lawler remembers. "The roof went off the place. He was trying to run out of the ring and she would grab him and pick him up again."

After two minutes she "got cotton mouth" from nervousness, and Kaufman pinned her to the ground.

"The people were booing and Andy was strutting. In the dressing-room afterwards he said it was the greatest moment of his life."

The event was so popular that Lawler suggested a rematch. "You know, this Foxy thinks she has a chance with me," Kaufman the bad-guy wrestler said on Memphis TV. "I'm Andy Kaufman, I'm from Hollywood. If she can beat me I'm going to raise the prize to \$1,000 and I will marry her."

Foxy replied she could use the money because her house had just

burned down, but she wouldn't marry Andy Kaufman if he was the last man on earth.

The fight began with Foxy making a fool of Andy Kaufman. Despite Lawler's training, she again ran out of breath. As Andy pinned her down in triumph and the crowd booed him, Lawler intervened because, he says, Kaufman was rubbing her face against the canvas and kicking her. He picked Kaufman up. "He was so light he just flew across the ring. He said you can't touch me, you're a profes-

sional wrestler, I'm gonna sue you." Lawler proposed they wrestle instead. Kaufman, who had only ever wrestled women, enthusiastically agreed to take on the Southern Heavyweight Champion.

This time his TV appearances became even more offensive to the South. "When I got off the plane the smell hit me," he told them. "I'm going to show you something that will help your hygiene enormously (holding up a roll of toilet paper). If when you go to your little outhouses you used this, the smell would go away."

It was as if he was giving Memphis a scapegoat, an arrogant representative of Hollywood to hate. In the ring, Lawler destroyed him as the people commanded. "He had incensed the crowd so much... people really expected me to hurt him. It was like the old Roman gladiator thing. If I had had a sword and asked if I should cut his head off, everybody in that audience would have given him the thumbs down."

Lawler "just reached down and picked him up and dropped back with him. Apparently that just knocked Andy out. I reached down and grabbed his head, picked him up in the air, did the move where you let him crash on top of his head. The crowd was going mad."

When Kaufman was taken away from the ring on a stretcher, with four compressed vertebrae, there was massive applause. "The crowd couldn't have been happier to see the Hollywood TV star being wheeled out in an ambulance."

Monday's Radio 4 revamp sounds great in principle. But the hidden agenda is a budget cut of 30 per cent. **Anne Karpf** reports

Radio chaos

There will be no ribbon-cutting, but Monday will see the unravelling of a cultural landmark — the new Radio 4 schedule. Unprecedentedly, an entire radio network has been restructured and recommissioned. It's a necessarily audacious move, putting creaky old programmes out to pasture and opening up the network to fresh voices.

And yet, far from rejoicing at the new opportunities, BBC staff remain swathed in despair. Of course change is unsettling, and over the past five years the BBC has been buffeted by it. Sour grapes might also play a part. And you can't discount the crony factor: disconsolate broadcasters feeding their grievances to their press confrères, who, in solidarity over-report bureaucratic follies and low morale.

Yet none of this explains the extent of BBC misery. Nor does it quiet major concerns about BBC Radio's future. Indeed the recent reorganisation — the introduction of the internal market, the move to bimodal departments and the split between production and broadcast — has favoured television and left radio fatally weakened.

Producer Choice, the introduction of an internal market in the BBC, usefully inducted staff into the real world and got them thinking about the costs of services. Yet



it was shaped round the complex, pricey world of television and not the simpler, cheaper world of radio. It also created absurdities. The BBC, for example, owns Broadcasting House, and yet it charges its own departments accommodated there a market rent, which is reviewed every five years.

The situation with the BBC libraries has been slightly modified since last year's deluge of press reports revealing that, rather than pay the £12 charge for a single borrowing of a CD from the Gramophone Library, staff from around the BBC were hot-footing to HMV to buy the same CD for their own departments. But things are still critical. The introduction of prohibitive (though now cheaper) charges on a pay-as-you-use basis (to be paid for out of

shrinking programme budgets) has led to a reduction in the use of libraries, which in turn will bring about cuts.

A producer in the studio with a leading actress found that she didn't know how to pronounce a crucial word. But the already stretched programme budget didn't allow her to consult the BBC's Pronunciation Unit, so they guessed and prayed. Staff at The World At One and PM were last year instructed not to use material from the Gramophone Library and since the cost of accessing the BBC sound archives is prohibitively high, World At One reporter Matt Peacock has said that "the greatest sound archive in the world is effectively closed to us".

Because of the cost, fact-checking is rationed (the smallest

inquiry costs £10). Producers now routinely phone bookshops to check up on books as it's cheaper than using the library. Local radio stations have all but ceased to use the BBC's libraries, since a couple of inquiries would eat up their entire programme budget.

Can the BBC's reputation survive the cull of its libraries? An entire edition — 200 scores — of Bach cantatas was thrown out, though staff found it on a skip and retrieved it. As many as half of the BBC's 160,000 book stock will be jettisoned in order "to reduce our dependence on books". Staff have appealed to larger institutions like the London Library to rescue some so that the BBC can borrow them back when necessary.

On Monday, and on Radio 4's actual relaunch day, April 6, attention will focus on the reinvigoration of the schedule. But the hidden agenda is Radio 4's need to slash its spend by 30 per cent to help fund the BBC's digital expansion. This has meant that although the commissioning brief for the new Radio 4 was by all accounts fabulously stimulating, the price allocated for making the programmes was undeliverably small.

The cats in radio were never very fat. Now they're anorexic. A few years ago, a producer could spend three or four weeks putting together a half-hour programme. Today it's unusual to get more than five days. The split between the production wing of the BBC and the broadcast wing means that producers must sell sufficient programmes to BBC Broadcast — at least 200-220 days' worth a year — to safeguard their jobs. Thinking time has disappeared.

But is there any effect on pro-

grammes? One insider compares it to watching children grow — undiscernible daily, but you notice after an absence. John Birt has said that the cuts have made no impact on the quality of programming, and would cease when they did. By then, say staff, it will be too late.

Some believe that it already is. Peter Everett, former head of Network Radio (South), fears that in the new BBC measurement culture creative radio may not survive. Devaluing the immeasurable, management relies on cost, ratings, and the Appreciation Index (AI) to judge quality. But averaged out, a moderately enjoyed programme (5) will get the same AI as one which strongly divides its audience (Als of 1 and 9). As Everett says, "There is no system (at present) which can measure the intensity of a listening experience." New comedy programmes rarely win high AIs: by this yardstick, would we ever have had Alan Partridge, or the pioneering *The Day Today*?

Pessimism is no new visitor to the BBC. This, however, is different. There is a sense of *Near Zero*, where experience is scorned and past service unvalued. For 35 years Derek Dresher almost single-handedly husbanded jazz onto BBC Radio. And yet, as a result of the new Saturday evening Radio 3 jazz commission being won by an independent company, he and his vastly experienced jazz sound engineer have been sidelined in favour of a team that made an impressive submission but that has never before recorded live music.

In the newly bimodal BBC, television is inevitably dominant, since it brings in more money to production departments than radio ever could. But radio and

television remain different animals. TV is a team game, while a radio programme is more of an individual producer's creation. The bimodal BBC, argues Everett, is based on the news model (Birt's background), and news is news, whether on radio or TV. But in drama, features and documentary, "the grammar of radio is quite different, yet increasingly judgments are based purely on programme content rather than also form or style".

It's widely believed that senior BBC management have no understanding of how radio programmes are created — of the culture of the BBC, the importance of shared skills, resources and informal staff interchange. With the overworking of producers and the dissolution of working relationships, how will skills be passed on, and future talent be grown? As the wraps come off the new Radio 4 schedule on Monday, it's something to ponder.



onnolly ou
I Saints er

John 1:50

Rugby Union

There is little sign of peace in England's civil war and one once great Midlands club finds no shelter from the fall-out

Twickenham's immovable force

Robert Armstrong
on Fran Cotton, the
prop who gave no
quarter and is just
as unyielding today

It takes about 10 minutes in the company of Fran Cotton to understand why the Rugby Football Union might have a problem reaching an early peace agreement with the Premiership club owners.

Big Fran, a former England and Lions prop, is one of the most respected of the domestic game. Tough, generous, amusing, larger than life. But Cotton's conversation is peppered with phrases like "absolute crap", "bloody stupid" and "total nonsense". They are hardly the measured phrases that one might

'Hell will freeze over before we release players for Fran's Barmy Army'

expect from a skilled negotiator. By a bizarre coincidence, all the key figures in the war of attrition between the top clubs and Twickenham are self-made millionaires whose business expertise would bring a nostalgic tear to the eye of Baroness Thatcher.

Like his RFU chairman, Cliff Brittle, and the Newcastle owner, Sir John Hall, Fran Cotton is a commercial mover and shaker, unaccustomed to taking "no" for an answer or, one suspects, proceeding step by painful step towards a compromise solution.

In other words, prop Cotton, Brittle, and the eight major club owners in a room together — something no one has yet achieved — and you have all the combustible ingredients of an almighty

punch-up. Apart from Saracens' Nigel Wray, whose subtle, low-key style is that of a professional diplomat, the men who will determine the fate of English professional rugby would not be out of place in a fairground boxing booth. The level of dialogue they have between each other is that primitive.

In his role as Lions manager in South Africa last summer Cotton proved again that he is a winner in playing matters and soon after his triumphant return home he was given a key job with the RFU's national playing committee. However, solving the deep-rooted structural and political problems thrown up by professionalism is quite another matter.

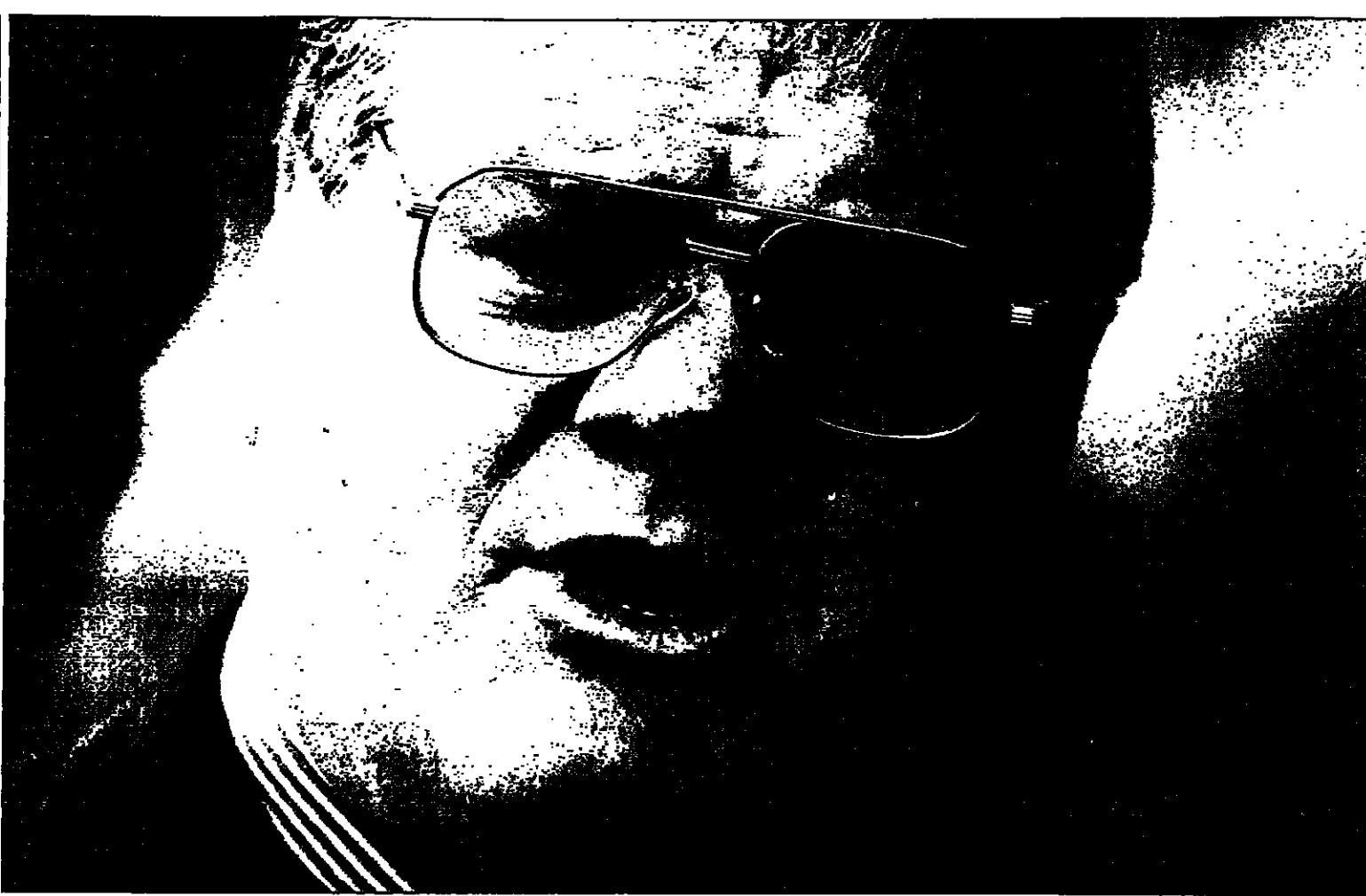
In any case Cotton cannot so much as sneeze without reporting back to Brittle, a man whom Gerald Butler, QC, accused of having "a near unshakeable belief that he is right".

Cotton admits that "professional club rugby is fundamental to the future of the game" and has brought about a significant improvement in playing standards. Yet he has angered the clubs, including his beloved Sale, by resurrecting the unpopular concept of divisions — or provinces — as part of a proposed format for the European Cup.

Recently the clubs turned their back on next season's competition which is run in effect by a Five Nations committee of directors. As one owner remarked: "Hell will freeze over before we release our players for Fran's Barmy Army."

Last month Cotton, who is also vice-chairman of the RFU's management board, unveiled a grandiose scheme called "Club England — A Vision for the Future" which the owners rubbished this week in a document that suggested the RFU was trying to destroy the clubs.

Cotton's personal vision, which will shortly come before the RFU council, bears an uncanny resemblance to the political superstructure of the old Soviet Union which held the reins of power under



Cold blast from the North... Fran Cotton does not mince his words or take a backward step in the confrontation with the clubs. PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE BRET

tight centralised control and created artificial administrative areas in which workers were moved around like unthinking pawns.

Cotton made the chilling proposal, for instance, that "if there is an over-abundance of positional talent in a province then Club England could use a draft system (to transfer a player) into another province."

Little wonder that the club owners, who speak the crisp pragmatic language consistent with running a medium-sized sports business, feel

they have no common ground with Cotton or Brittle, who incidentally has issued his personal vision called "Rugby Restructure 2000" which seeks to restore amateurism.

Cotton's frantic offer "to meet the owners in an igloo at the North Pole if necessary" reflects Twickenham's complete isolation from the leading clubs.

Suspicion and mistrust has also been engendered by Cotton's insistence that the best players be put under long-term contract to the RFU, a condition that would

promptly strengthen the union's bargaining position with television and the major sponsors to the detriment of the clubs.

Brittle drew attention to Twickenham's anxieties over player control when he complained the other day that the clubs are aiming ultimately to take over international rugby because club matches have only moderate value for the television companies.

Sir John Hall has already hinted at an interest in the international game which he believes is not sold and mar-

keted as it might be. Predictably the owners want all their players to be contracted to "clubs only".

Cotton bitterly rejects Sir John's charge that he wants to carry out "ethnic cleansing" and that the major clubs should recruit England-qualified players only and exclude Celts and foreigners. But he disputes the clubs' claim that 76 per cent of their 400 full-time professionals are English-qualified.

"How many of those are in their first-team squad and actually get on the pitch?" he

asked. Twickenham and the clubs hurl statistics and brickbats at each other daily but there is no sign that a statesmanlike personality is about to emerge to end the cold war that has left the fans totally bemused.

The immediate question is whether Cotton and Brittle can do so and bring to the game the unity of purpose they promised when they were elected last summer. As things stand they are more like the Bash Street Kids than a pair of professional troubleshooters.

Moseley left on rugby's back-burner

Ian Malin on the plight of less fortunate clubs who were quick to embrace professionalism, only to get knocked down in the rush

THREE years ago a fire destroyed two-thirds of the main stand at The Reddings. It could have been an omen before the sport was engulfed by professionalism. Certainly the Moseley club have since had their fingers burned.

Today they entertain Waterloo in a midtable Premiership game, and at the end of another week in which the Premiership One club owners and Twickenham have again locked horns this match will be played out in front of a crowd that barely touches four figures at a ground that, give or take the work of the arsonist, has changed little since the days of those Seventies heroes Sam Doble and Jan Webster.

They are once more just another rugby club in a leafy suburb. For their supporters the Pink 'Un is usually the Sports Argus on Saturday evenings, however this week the other Pink 'Un, the Financial Times, advertised the 125-year-old club for sale.

Now Moseley are once more

a part-time professional club where their squad of 21 trains on Tuesday and Thursday nights. The club inhabits a world that is a far cry from that of Newcastle, Saracens and Bath, though they survived in the then Courage League First Division for its first four years until relegation struck in 1992.

Yet Moseley had grandiose ambitions little more than a year ago when the former Wales coach, Allan Lewis, took over from Barrie Corless. The club had been taken over by a consortium of businessmen, which included Aston Villa's chairman Doug Ellis.

A late revival saw Moseley throw off the threat of relegation, and a number of big names joined, including Leicester's England A pair, the wing Steve Hackney and the full-back John Lilley, and the Wales A lock Steve Moore. They linked up with players such as the Canadian Al Charron, one of the world's leading flankers, the former Scotland flanker Ian Smith and the Ireland wing Darragh O'Mahony.

The consortium injected £500,000 at the start of last season and another £500,000 last summer. But, with a players' wage bill of around £1 million a year and an average home gate around 1,500, the figures simply did not add up. Last month the club went into administration.

The players who chose to remain were told that their salaries would be halved. Twelve leading players, including Charron, Hackney and Lilley were made redundant. Moore, who has a knee

The club inhabits a world that is a far cry from that of Newcastle, Saracens and Bath

injury, is unlikely to play for Moseley again; and his fellow lock, the club captain Richard Denhardt, will move to Worcester this summer.

The 29-year-old Hackney has moved on to Waterloo and makes a quick return to The Reddings today. Once the three-month administration period ends, Hackney and Lilley become creditors and they insist they intend to recoup some of their promised salaries.

Hackney, who was six months into a four-year contract worth some £45,000 a year, said: "My beef was not with the players, many of whom have missed this season's transfer deadline, but with a club which has messed around with lives. I spent six or seven fantastic years at Leicester and I didn't really want to leave, but I was promised a package that was too good to refuse."

Now Hackney trains at nearby Old Basowthians and in a local gym, joining his new Waterloo team-mates for their Tuesday and Thursday night sessions. Just like old times. "I'm happy to be part-time again. Having been burned once I don't want that experience again."

Moseley's plight illustrates the risk of professionalism without a backer with deep pockets or a deep well of local support. Other Premiership Two clubs, such as Wakefield and Fylde, whose crowd numbers are in the hundreds rather than thousands, have cut salaries and redrafted contracts this winter. Even Coventry, who have a wealthy backer in Gerry Sugrue, are in trouble after paying generous salaries to attract big names to Compton Road.

Many members at Coventry are unhappy at plans to sell their ground. Moseley have already completed a deal with Bryant Homes and will have to leave The Reddings in three years' time. Not only hard up, but homeless too.

Chill winds are blowing through England's second division. But for Moseley the future is not all bleak. As Hackney returns to his old firm this afternoon, Moseley's Colts play at Middlesbrough in a quarter-final of the National Colts Cup. Moseley's youngsters, who have won all their 16 games this season, are the best in the land. On the playing side, at least, Moseley's stock looks strong on the future's market.

Bath look to turn clock back as time runs out in title race

Ian Malin

BATH and Leicester, once as secure as the top of the English game as a civil servant's pension, meet at the Recreation Ground today. Defeat for either and their chances of winning the first Allied Dunbar Premiership title would be as secure as a club coach's job.

Since the turn of the year Bath have shown the sort of form that allowed them to share Leicester's title chances last April. Bath's startling 47-9 victory was the best performance by any side in the domestic game last season.

Bath is a dangerous third, eight points behind the leaders Saracens but with two games in hand, Leicester are a point adrift of Bath.

John Wells, the new Leicester forwards coach, admitted the game was a four-pointer, with the vanquished side finally losing touch with the leaders.

Wells said: "There will be enormous pressure, especially on Andy (Robinson) and Dean (Richards) to get a result."

Leicester are without Martin Corry, who plays in the blind-side flanker position and will have a run-out in Can-

nock's league match against visiting Southgate today. Corry has proved himself an extremely well organised unit this winter, as have the fast-breaking Canterbury side who boast nine successive wins and face Bedford in the league today.

Six Cannock players returned from England's tournament in Malaysia only three days ago and one of them, Justin Pidcock, is unwell and unlikely to play. However, Bob Crutchley, the league's leading scorer who missed the England trip with an ankle injury, is fit again and will have a run-out in Can-

nock's league match against visiting Southgate today. Corry has proved himself an extremely well organised unit this winter, as have the fast-breaking Canterbury side who boast nine successive wins and face Bedford in the league today.

Tennis

Graf pulls out after hamstring strain renews injury woe

ASTRAINED hamstring ruined Steffi Graf's latest comeback when she retired in the third set of her Evert Cup semi-final match against Lindsay Davenport at Indian Wells, California, yesterday.

Graf, who has had a long list of ailments during her career, was trailing 6-4, 4-6, 4-2 to the defending champion. The German was playing in her second tournament in her second tournament after a nine-month absence after knee surgery.

For months after the operation, she did not even know if she would return to competition, so she was delighted to get to the semi-finals without

dropping a set. "It's like, what else?" said Graf, 28, for whom a hamstring strain was a new experience.

Graf, who has won 21 Grand Slam singles titles and held the world No. 1 ranking for 374 weeks, said she did not know if she would be ready for next week's Lipton Championships in Key Biscayne.

Pete Sampras's world No. 1 status is in doubt after he crashed 7-5, 6-3 to the unseeded Austrian Thomas Muster in the ATP Championships Cup, also at Indian Wells.

The victory for Muster, a former world No. 1 now ranked 20th, means the Aus-

tralian Open champion Petr Korda can take over the top spot with a victory. Korda, the second seed, beat the German teenager Tommy Haas 7-6, 6-2 to reach the quarter-finals.

Sampras was not the only giant to fall in the third round. Andre Agassi, who has worked his way to 40th in the world from 141st last November, ousted the third-seeded Australian Pat Rafter, the US Open champion, 6-3, 3-6, 6-2. Agassi will face the lowest-ranked player left in the draw — 128th-ranked wildcard Jan-Michael Gambill, the sixth

seed, advanced with a 6-3, 7-5 victory over Spain's Carlos Moya, setting up a confrontation with the unseeded Swede Thomas Enqvist.

"I was very pleased with the way I played," said the British No. 1 Rusedski, who had a first-round bye. "I served a lot better, played a more solid overall game and fixed up a few areas I wasn't pleased with."

Rusedski, who has beaten the 25th-ranked Enqvist in three of their four encounters, served 12 aces in the 63-minute clash and Moya never had a chance to break his opponent's serve.

Sailing

British women claim bronze

BRITAIN won a bronze medal in the final race of the women's keelboat event at the ISAF World Championships. Shirley Robertson, with Sue Carr, Sally Cuthbert and Jo Grindley, sailed a well-controlled race but did not have enough lead over their Danish and American rivals overall, writes Bob Fisher.

"We feel that this will help our Olympic campaigns," Robertson said. "Sailing a different boat meant having to re-start our thought processes. I'd like to think it will lead to something."

Hockey

Crunch time for Cannock and Canterbury

Pat Rowley

CANNOCK host Canterbury in the EHA Cup semi-finals tomorrow to decide which of the season's two outstanding men's clubs will reach the final for the first time and stay on course for a cup and league double, a feat achieved only once before, by Hounslow.

Canterbury will be seeking a double over Cannock who they beat 6-1 in their November league meeting. Another win would give them an important psychological boost as they return to Cannock in a fortnight for what promises

to be a decisive last league match of the season.

Cannock have proved themselves an extremely well organised unit this winter, as have the fast-breaking Canterbury side who boast nine successive wins and face Bedford in the league today.

Six Cannock players returned from England's tournament in Malaysia only three days ago and one of them, Justin Pidcock, is unwell and unlikely to play.

However, Bob Crutchley, the league's leading scorer who missed the England trip with an ankle injury, is fit again and will have a run-out in Can-

Cycling

Belgian powers on as Hunt quits

William Fotheringham
in Sisteron

AS THE young Belgian Frank Vandenbroucke cemented his hold on the Paris-Nice "Race to the Sun" in the Alpes de Haute Provence yesterday, the British national champion Jeremy Hunt abandoned 80 miles into the sixth stage after struggling for a week in the toughest race of his career.

A month ago, the 24-year-old Devonian looked set to enjoy a flying start to his third season as a professional. He won his third race of the programme, a one-day event in Majorca, and carried this form into the first important Spanish stage race of spring, the Tour of Andalucia, where he twice came close to winning a stage.

At the end of that race, however, Hunt suffered flu which team doctors estimate has affected almost half of the entire professional peloton this spring. He then picked a shoulder injury, and followed this with a damaged knee. He came here well off his best form, having resumed training in earnest only four days before the start last Sunday.

"I wasn't going anywhere," he said. "I was getting better at one point this week, but I don't think my body is ready for this kind of effort yet. Other guys in the team have been knocked out by this flu for two weeks. I'm annoyed, because I wanted to finish. He is likely to resume next Saturday in the World Cup opening round, the Milan-San Remo classic.

Hunt, who rides for the Banesto team, was one of 10 yesterday's team-mates in the race. After four days when sun, rain and freezing temperatures have made life tough, the problem for the first time was the pace: the stage averaged over 25mph for 118 hilly miles (189km) through the lavender fields and fortified villages around a snowcapped Mont Ventoux and into the Alpine foothills.

Under a ferocious onslaught from the Spanish Once team, led by the three-time winner Laurent Jalabert, Vandenbroucke's Mapei led the bunch in the main climb of the day, the Col de l'Homme Mort, he had only the former world champion Johan Museeuw to assist his defence of the white leader's jersey. But Jalabert had five team-mates in the 40-strong lead group.

However, the Frenchman had wasted energy in a series of unsuccessful attempts to leave him for dead on l'Homme Mort, and was unable to exploit his team's numerical superiority on the mainly descending road into Sisteron. He finished with Vandenbroucke in the main group of around 40 riders.

Belgian cycling is generally held to have been moribund since Eddy Merckx retired 30 years ago, but on this week's evidence it is alive and kicking. The victory yesterday of the recently naturalised Moldovan Tchimel gave the Belgians their fifth stage win in six days. If Vandenbroucke holds out over the hills to Cannes today, as seems likely, he will give his country its first victory in this race since the days of Merckx, and the revival will be well under way.

Today's stage (final): Sisteron-Cannes, 223 km.

STOP WHAT CAR?

AWARDS 1997

Before you buy the wrong car

IF IT'S NEW, IT'S IN HERE!

T3

FOCUS

The new-look T3 is bigger and better, with even more gadgets!

From cars to cameras, computers to CDs - if it's new, it's in

New issue out now £2.70

T3

SPECIAL TRIAL OFFER

3 trial issues for only £4.50

Save £1.20 on the cover price

£3.30 issues delivered free to your home

The T3 is yours to keep for 14 days

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

POSTCODE _____

DATE _____

ORDER HOTLINE: 01488 271121

Free guide with every T3 magazine

Football

Paul Hayward evaluates the Arsenal manager's frame of mind on the eve of the game which could decide the championship

Wenger and the last roll of the dice

SO THE parrot wasn't dead, after all — just resting. Arsenal yesterday boarded a train to Manchester needing two minutes to make a victory over United at Old Trafford was one; the other was a Virgin train capable of getting them there in time for today's 11.15am kick-off. But now is the time to gamble.

The Manchester bookie who paid out on United winning the championship could yet be knocking on a few doors to ask for his money back. The two clenched fists with which Arsène Wenger uncharacteristically greeted Arsenal's victory over Wimbledon on Wednesday night marked the coming back to life of a torpid title race.



Wenger's two clenched fists marked the coming back to life of a torpid title race

Wenger, a gentle tease of over-excited scribes, was not in playful mood at the team's headquarters yesterday. "He just wants to talk about the football, not mind games," we were warned.

Arsenal finally departed London fields after eight successive games in the capital for a match that will surely make or break their chances of seizing the title, though Wenger, as he must, denies it. "If we lose, it puts us in a hard position but it's not mathematically over," he said. "I said a few weeks ago that it is not over. This is an important game but not a decisive one."

Behind the measured words this is a club bursting out of its skin, like Alexi Sayle in one of his tightest suits. They are building a new training ground and have put in a bid to buy Wimbledon for all their disenfranchised fans. They are nine points behind United with three games in hand and are two games away from an FA Cup final appearance. Two months of mayhem lie ahead, but with a possible double glinting at the road's end.

United hold the initiative, and the bookmakers still see them as the favourites, but current trends favour Arsenal. Of the 92 league clubs, they and Notts County alone have managed to keep their total of defeats down to four (United have lost six). Alex Ferguson's team have taken only 11 points from a possible 34 in their last eight games and scored just seven goals.

Trevor Francis described

Arsenal's first-half performance against Wimbledon as "as good as I've seen by a Premier side this season". Up the road in east London, United were labouring to a 1-1 draw with West Ham.

"We had a very good first half, but I don't agree it's the best we've played all season," says Wenger. "We did play at a high level, though. What pleased me was that we were dangerous and created chances and also solid."

"Apart from a bad spell, we have shown consistency. In 17 games now, we have lost only at Chelsea (in the Coca-Cola Cup). At the beginning of the season we went 15 games without losing. This year the team is coping better. Last year we went out of the FA and Coca-Cola cups early but this year we were in the semi-finals of one and the quarters of the other. And yet we are still challenging for the league."

It's not just Sky and Premier League marketing gurus who will consider this captivating stuff. "We are lucky because Manchester United have a big game after the one

against us," said Wenger. He was referring to the visit of Monaco in Wednesday's Champions League quarter-final second leg. "It's a big worry for them, and they will have that game in mind."

By this stage, managers are usually moaning about everything from calf strains to the bubonic plague. Wenger's squad, however, is not disgruntled but budding with the spring. Nigel Winterburn and Alex Manninger trained fully yesterday and David Seaman and Steve Bould are likely to be back next week.

Wenger's riskier foreign imports are contributing more fully than the sceptics imagined they would. Christopher Wreh scored their only goal against Wimbledon and Emmanuel Petit looks increasingly assured in the centre where he will have to deal today with United's tigerish midfield.

Optimistic though he is, Wenger will have avoided any bookies' on yesterday's train journey to Manchester. The odds-board makes grim reading for Arsenal. They are a huge 4-1 to win at Old Trafford, which implies some sort of backlash is about to hit them, and United are, at best, 6-1 on to retain the title.

Fred Done, the bookmaker who has already paid out, insists that he has "Done" the right thing. He is offering more ignominy by inviting 9-1 Arsenal to win the league — the best price available anywhere. Five of United's remaining eight games are at Old Trafford. For Arsenal the possession of three games in hand sounds grand until one considers they will have to go out and win them.

Wenger believes that all neutrals will support Arsenal this morning because a victory for them will "make the league more interesting". Though not keen to play mind games, he did point out that United "have shown less consistency in the last two months".

A quiet night in Manchester was disturbed only by one devilish dilemma: whether to play Wreh or Nicolas Anelka up front alongside Dennis Bergkamp. Being playful at last, Wenger told us: "I hope the God of football will visit me in my sleep and tell me what to do."



Arsène Wenger... 'I said a few weeks ago that it is not over'

PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

Arsenal whet the appetite before lunch

David Lacey says defeat for vulnerable United today could start a title stampede

BY LUNCHTIME today the Premiership will know if it still has a fight on its hands. Should Arsenal beat Manchester United at Old Trafford this morning the championship will have opened up in earnest. At the moment United,

seeking to become only the fourth club to complete a league hat-trick and within sight of their fifth title in six seasons, hold a nine-point lead over Arsenal, who have three games in hand. A win for Alex Ferguson's side today and it will be hard to

see who can possibly stop them achieving their aim.

Arsène Wenger's team have already defeated Manchester United once this season, and without the suspended Dennis Bergkamp. A late header from David Platt brought them a 3-2 victory at Highbury in November after two goals from Teddy Sheringham had answered Arsenal's early 2-0 lead.

But Arsenal have not won on United's ground since October 1990, when a mass brawl led to FA fines and points deductions, and they have failed to score there on their last five visits.

Arsenal will pin their hopes on two factors: Manchester United's indifferent form, which has seen them drop 14 points in 10 league matches while Wenger's side have not lost in nine, and the distraction of Monaco's visit to Old Trafford on Wednesday in the return leg of a Champions League quarter-final. Add to this Ferguson's injury problems and an Arsenal win becomes something more than a pipe dream.

So far almost everything has gone Manchester United's way. The early loss of Roy Keane, with damaged cruciate ligaments, has been offset by the consistent excellence of his midfield replacement, Nicky Butt. The arrival of Sheringham from Tottenham restored the confidence and prolific scoring ability of Andy Cole. Ryan Giggs has also had his best season so far.

Now suddenly Ferguson has worries over injuries. Giggs is recovering from a pulled hamstring, Gary Pallister's latest backache may or may not have eased in time for today. But suffered a calf strain during Wednesday's 1-1 draw at West Ham, and Phil Neville, another hamstring victim, is also doubtful.

Manchester United's manager has to pick this morning's team with the Monaco game partly in mind. Giggs may just make it back by Wednesday, but today United will be looking to Sheringham, Cole and Paul Scholes to preserve the status quo at the top of the table.

United's fiftful Premiership form has gone unpunished by Chelsea, Blackburn Rovers and Liverpool, the teams best placed to exploit the downturn.

Five weeks ago, when Manchester United were held to 1-1 at home by Bolton Wanderers, any one of these three could have closed the gap to two points. But they all lost and United instead extended their lead by one.

So now it is down to Arsenal to keep the race realistically alive, and with them nothing should ever be ruled out. In 1971, when there were two points for a win, they took the title after losing seven of their last 10 games at the end of February with two matches in hand. Statistically the present position is comparable.

This morning Arsenal will look primarily to Bergkamp, Marc Overmars and Ray Parlour, as well as Alex Manninger's impressive goalkeeping, to bring them victory. Any other result and Manchester United will be well content.

Barnsley upwardly mobile and hopeful of staying that way

Ian Ross

SEVEN months' hard graft in the Premiership may have served to dispel the notion that watching Barnsley is like watching Brazil, but as the campaign edges towards its climax the Yorkshiremen do continue to win friends and influence people.

Two months ago no one on the fresh-air side of an asylum wall would have given tuppence for Barnsley's chances of avoiding a swift and ungracious return whence they came last May.

Should things go well today and badly for Everton or Tottenham, Barnsley will move out of the bottom three.

"Winning at Aston Villa in midweek was a major, major result for us," said their manager Danny Wilson. "All we can do is keep going and keep hoping. I think we can survive but I know that four or five other managers are saying exactly the same thing."

suspended Carlton Palmer along with the injured Kevin Davies and David Hughes.

Everton's plight deepens almost daily and should Blackburn Rovers inflict another home defeat on the Merseysiders the thoroughfares surrounding Goodison Park will likely be swollen by another vociferous demonstration.

The latest player asked to step into the august boots of the suspended Duncan Ferguson is John Spencer, the on-loan Ranger from Loftus Road.

Crystal Palace's fate will be all but sealed if they succumb at Aston Villa. Neil Shipperley may make a cameo appearance for the Eagles. Villa have Dwight Yorke suspended and Savo Milosevic standing by for the doubtful Stan Collymore.

Bolton may also be supping at the last-chance saloon for to lose at home to Sheffield Wednesday would be akin to running a large white flag up a large pole. Wanderers will welcome back the defender Mark Fish while Wednesday's Macedonian Gorge Sedloski is likely to make his debut.

Boro left blue in the face

Football Diary

Martin Thorpe

HOW wonderful to see the North-east paying tribute to its roots. Sunderland are about to unveil a four-metre high, half-ton model of a miners' Davy Lamp outside the Stadium of Light in memory of the many fans who have worked down the pits over the years. The stadium is built on the site of a former colliery.

Five years ago Middlesbrough paid a similar tribute to their past, erecting a sculpture in honour of the town's famous, sea-faring son Captain James Cook. It took the form of a 35ft-high bottle which the artist Claes Oldenberg painted blue to signify the sea and sky, the good captain's only vista for many a year.

The view of some Middlesbrough football fans is, sadly, much narrower. They want this particular part of the town painted red, not only to reflect Boro's shirts, but because blue is the colour of Chelsea, their opponents in this month's Coca-Cola Cup final.

In fact several fans have written to the local council arguing that a red bottle "would have more relevance for people". Says the fanzine editor Rob Nichols.

So the council duly approached Claes Oldenberg with the idea. He went blue. He wished the game well at Wembley but pointed out that the colour was integral to the whole point of the sculpture and he preferred it to stay that way.

Perhaps these disgruntled Boro fans could chip in and erect a giant lager can.

THINGS go from bad to worse for Doncaster Rovers, now 12 points adrift at the foot of the Third Division. They recently signed the striker Padi Wilson from Plymouth, hailed as the man who would steer Rovers away from the Vauxhall Conference. He has just been jailed for three months for driving while disqualified.

DARREN Huckerby's nickname among his Coventry team-mates is 'Fore'. Apparently, he is not very bright but can run fast.

LAST week's Diary featured an item about the BBC's live television coverage of Aston Villa's UEFA Cup tie with Atletico Madrid being hijacked by adverts placed around the pitch for Channel 5's live coverage of the home leg.

We suggested one way for the BBC to get their own back would be to place their own advert around the Villa pitch during the live coverage saying "Yes, but we've got Des Lynam". Brian Travers lives in Borsham where they cannot pick up CS. He suggests the BBC's advert should read: "Please tell the other third what's happened."

AMAZING how history is repeating itself at Middlesbrough. For Emerson and Branco, read Merson and Branca.

IN THE build-up to this morning's big game, the week's reporters have been full of opinions about whether Arsène Wenger has got what it takes to out-psyche the reigning mind-games champion Alex Ferguson.

Now, it seems, Highbury are worried about their man. For this advert appeared in The Guardian during the week. "Wanted: an Arsenal manager to manage a mental-health team which includes qualified social and support workers working closely alongside psychologists."

Okay, it was placed by Greenview Council in the Social Services section (and spotted by H. Coe of Finchley).

WITH all the talk about divisional reorganisation, no one has suggested the obvious — a buffer division of Barnsley, Bolton, Crystal Palace, Middlesbrough, Nottingham Forest and Sunderland to play each other four times, one-up, one-down and, to even things out, Palace to play all their games away.

APPARENTLY Jürgen Klinsmann was so worried about Tottenham's relegation problems that he went to church last Sunday, but left early because he did not like the service.

The Guardian Travel Shop World Cup '98

In association with David Dryer Sports Tours, the Guardian Travel Shop is able to offer exclusive discounts on World Cup packages.



David Dryer Sports Tours have transformed three Club Med resorts into International Villages of Football. During the World Cup these resorts will become international hubs of activity catering for football enthusiasts and their families from around the world.

Resorts can be made for any number of nights between 10 June and 13 July 1998. Prices for all board accommodation are £20 per person per night (maximum of £100 per person) and decrease with the number of nights booked. Guardian readers who quote the reference number below will qualify for discounts starting at £20 per person and increasing by £10 every 3 nights. On the 10th anniversary of the World Cup games, first-class travel to see most of the World Cup games. First-class travel to see most of the World Cup games. First-class travel to see most of the World Cup games. First-class travel to see most of the World Cup games.

For more information, contact David Dryer Sports Tours quoting the reference number below. Offer valid until 27 March 1998.

0171 831 7799

To: David Dryer Sports Tours, Fourth Floor, 73 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3JB.

Please send me full details of the following Guardian Travel Offer:

☐ World Cup '98 GOODW

☐ Please tick this box if you do NOT wish to receive details of other offers from the Guardian or other companies approved by the Guardian.

Name: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____

Scottish preview

Booth and Jess get the call from Brown

Patrick Glenn

CRAIG BROWN's World Cup plans began to take shape yesterday when he announced three Scotland squads, one for the Denmark match at Ibrox on Wednesday week, another for a B international against Wales at Broadwood Stadium the night before and an Under-21 version for the Denmark game on the Tuesday afternoon.

In his search for more potency in attack Brown has recalled Scott Booth, the former Aberdeen striker who is on loan from Borussia Dortmund to the Dutch club

Utrecht. There is also a place for Eoin Jess.

Booth seemed to have an assured future with the national team two years ago when he scored in four successive matches, but was then hindered by injury. "I really do want to see him again," said Brown. "I was in Paris last week talking to Gus Hiddink, the Dutch national coach, and he reported very favourably on Booth."

Booth seems certain to partner Kevin Gallacher as Gordon Durie is unavailable due to the concussion he suffered at Kilmarnock 17 days ago. He has a mandatory four-week period of recovery.

Durie, of course, will be missing from Rangers's awkward game at Motherwell today, as will the injured Paul Gascoigne and Brian Laudrup. Celtic, at home to Dundee United tomorrow, continue without Jackie McNamara and, with Morten Wieghorst down with flu, are likely to be unchanged.

SCOTLAND Goran (Rangers), Leighton (Aberdeen), Sullivan (Wimbledon), Boyd (Celtic), Callaghan (Tottenham), Duff (Derby), Elliott (Leicester), Hendry (Blackburn), McKennan (Celtic), Wale (Hull), Whyte (Aberdeen), Barclay (Celtic), Collins (Monaco), Gallacher (Blackburn), Gormally (Nottingham Forest), Hughes (Leeds), Lambert (Celtic), McCall (Rangers), McTear (Blackburn), Donnelly (Celtic), Durie (Rangers), Hume (Glasgow), Hughton (Blackburn), Jones (Aberdeen), Jackson (Celtic), Joss (Aberdeen).

A N Other

HAD this alert, agile and fearless last line of defence dropped in a year or two earlier he would no doubt have been picked up at pistol-point by Captain Maitland. In the event he became a much-respected leading citizen in his adopted home, keeping a safe house for 14 years. He is best remembered for what could have been a final tragedy, when a dive at the feet of an incoming forward added grim realism to the phrase "neck or nothing".

Last week: Alan Curbishley (West Ham United, Birmingham City, Aston Villa, Charlton Athletic, Brighton and Hove Albion, Charlton Athletic).



Performance of the week: Alex Manninger (Arsenal), whose goalkeeping against Wimbledon on Wednesday night contributed greatly to a victory which has kept the championship alive.

It's paradise at Pirate Sam's Motel

A

S

Ski Hotline

0891 002 006

0897 800 636

Guardian

King Cotton
The immovable
giant of
Twickenham
21

sport

www.westindies98.co.uk

The 100 club... Mark Ramprakash, left, and Graham Thorpe, who put on 205 for a sixth-wicket record against West Indies, enjoy the moments when they reached their respective centuries

A black and white photograph of a man, likely a cricketer, standing on a field. He is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved button-down shirt and dark trousers. He is holding a cricket bat in his right hand and a ball in his left hand, with both arms raised in a celebratory gesture. The background is a bright, overexposed field.

Mike Selvey in Bridgetown sees Thorpe and Ramprakash stand proudly as twin centurions

MARK Ramprakash and Graham Thorpe grew up together as youth players, England A team tourists and Test match batsmen. part of a group of young players known as the Brat Pack. Both promised much yet in their early years neither was allowed to deliver.

In the heat and noise of Kensington Oval that all

forced Nixon McLean to flee through extra cover for his 13th boundary and the one that took him to his first Test century. It was a sweet moment.

Restuming on 329 for five, the pair took the score to 336 before Thorpe, after more than 6½ hours at the crease, took much of it with the discomf of a back in spasm. He pushed forward to Carmichael Hooper's off-spin and edged it slip, where Brian Lara held a low catch. Thorpe, who had reached his half-century during the last ball of the first day, had made 103, the sixth century of his 48-match career —

but his first against West Indies — and the pair have added 205 for the sixth wicket. It was an England record against West Indies, eclipsing the 163 added by Tony Greig and Alan Knott on this same Bridgetown turf 24 years ago.

Rampershad had got the taste. Years ago Dennison Amiss, a hundred 100s behind him, confided that the game offered no more exhilaration than feeling than the chance to bat on a belting pitch, the sun warm on the back and a hundred already on the scoreboard. "That," he would say aloud, "is when it begins."

And so it did for Rampershad.

for once out, riches in the circumstances, and now this. I has taken him 38 innings to make a Test century but in Test match terms he is still a relatively young man at 22 and can redress the balance.

Mike Gatting hated 52 innings before he went to Bombay and his first Test was against India and Steve Waugh was arguably the most adhesive of modern-day Test batsmen when he was playing his 42nd innings around he pounded England all round Headingley for his maiden Test century.

Ramprakash is coming up very strongly on the rails as a future candidate for the Eng-

The only sign of tension came when he was 93, and with McLean bowling marginally wider he thought he detected an opportunity and launched into a cover drive that skewed off the outside edge in the air but evaded the fielders to crash into the boundary boards at square third man.

It had been a mental trap and he had only just escaped. Until he was out, a tired man but a fulfilled one, it was the last mistake he made.

Guardian

Support from Havelange, however, has already proved a poisoned chalice. No country lobbied harder to get the 2002 World Cup than Japan. With FIFA's president on their side and South Korea's rival bid no more than cloud on the horizon, how could the Japanese fail?

But by summer 1996 when FIFA's executive decided on the venue, Havelange's power was on the wane. His personal backing of South Africa for 2006 had upset European countries, led by Lennart Jo-

But a split European vote could let in South Africa, Brazil or Argentina, and if Johansson is the next Fifa president the pressure on England to stand aside could mount.

Tony Blair, therefore, would be unwise to set aside the 2006 as an election year just yet. And in any case Harold Wilson was re-elected in 1966 before, and not after, England's triumph. Surprising how many people believe this in both instances, it was George Hurst wot won it!

Trevor Haylett

IN AN extraordinary development yesterday, Crystal Palace put the midfielder Attilio Lombardo in temporary charge of team affairs as Selhurst Park, made Thomas Broolin his assistant and moved the manager Steve Coppell upstairs to director of football.

Coppell said: "It is a bold massive step and a lot of people will look on it as foolish, but at least we are trying to be positive. It might not work but then everyone outside the club thinks we are going down anyway."

Lombardo ... shocked to have been offered the job

ing: taking over so I can go back to being a player, even if Palace are relegated."

The Chelsea manager Gianluca Viali revealed yesterday that Lombardo rang him for advice before accepting the Palace offer. Lombardo played alongside Viali at Sampdoria as a teenager.

"Attilio rang me and said something very important had come up," said Viali. "He is one of my best friends and we speak a lot."

Goldberg is still pushing to lure Viali to the Palace coaching manager and John Barnes is also in the running but the club's plight became desperate with Wednesday night's 6-2 hiding at Chelsea. That seventh successive defeat forced Coppell to hasten his own exit.

Yesterday's events indicate that any progress with Yeaman is unlikely before the end of the season. Coppell said: "It's been like a slow strangulation where we have been drifting down the league. It was time for a change in view of the fact that my position would be changing and we had in our midst a man who had the talent and achievement as anyone in the game."

Mathers came to head on Thursday when Coppell sought talks with Goldberger and the outgoing owner. But the director of football Coppell's assistant was told to ask Lombardo to step in. The Italian and the Swede took training yesterday and Lombardo will choose today's team to face Aston Villa.

It is a case of transfer or sack. The arrival of Viali to Palace looks likely to pass through on Monday.

Only after tea did he waver as the effort of concentration in scurrying heat over a period of almost nine hours caught up with him. By then he had almost lost his wits, tired down as McLean across a return catch.

Rampkrantz walked off to a standing ovation from the packed stands. He had been a perfect pitcher, like in the packed ground. He and Thorpe had resurrected the England names which finished at 400—146 in 1902 and 1903. The first day for a first-class lunch on the first day when the scoreboard read 5 for 4, Thorpe had retired hurt and with Rampkrantz on the field. The best evidence for Ambrose's match had only for it to be dropped.

Thorpe is an established Test match batsman who has been the centre of the cricket world over the past decade that Rampkrantz's century could have not just on his career but on English cricket.

Left out of consideration at the start of the tour he was a suddenly wounded man who could not play in the forward. When the chance might have come to play, in Trinidad, he got hit. Given the opportunity, though, he could not have grasped it more.

Test match cricket has taken him into the Georgetown Test where he scored 29 runs

[illegible]

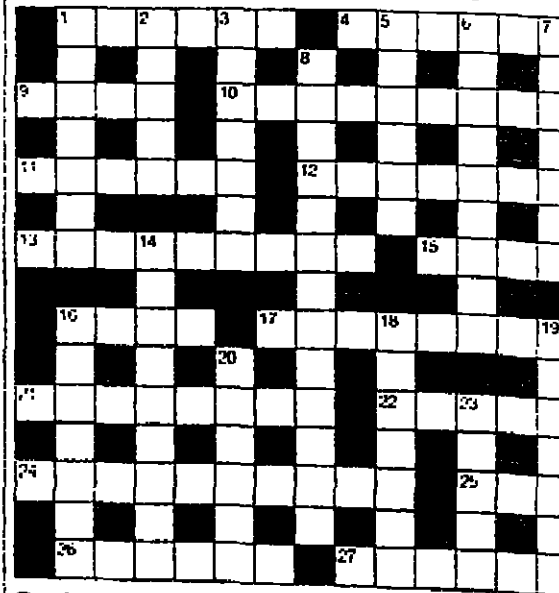
Scoreboard

[illegible]Guardian **COLLINS** Crossword 21.222

A copy of the Collins English Dictionary will be sent to the first five correct entries drawn. Entries to The Guardian Crossword, P.O. Box 14641, London, EC1R 3JX, or Fax 160171 719 4735 by first post on Friday. Solution and winners in the Guardian on Monday March 23.

[illegible]

☐ Tick here if you do not wish to receive further information from the Guardian Media Group or other companies screened by us.



Set by Araucaria

Across

1 See 4

4,1,9 Particular part of 23's
20' present what was frozen
in La Boheme (6,6,4)

10 The inspector has a jolly
good mood (10)

11 Operation causing a scare
(8)

12 Having passed like 11. 15
16down ———, or else

Petticoats will cover your top (4,4)
13 Live a brief hour among beasts of burden, making sauces (9)
15 20 (4)
16 A record's made it to the top (4)
17 Meddle, making 25 in top (5)
21 Pacific Islanders' row in HQ (8)
22 Much of the Cambrian period suggests secrecy (6)

- 24 Bad temper with 9 is outstanding (10)
- 25 Dance from the 22? (4)
- 26 Fix a way to enter the swamp (6)
- 27 Clever possessor, one among the rubbish (6)

Down

- 1 Field, lung for a time, disclosed inside information (7)
- 2 Christmas and Easter, near and spring (5)
- 3 Craving drink for five years (7)
- 5 Exit black girl having lost her head (6)
- 6 Doctor to the sick gets a hospital, the whole of the TA's building (5,4)
- 7 Recruit eating quately ... 2 black birds? (4,3)
- 8 23's 20 for 19 14: "15
15down ———": cast around green area with agreement on a point (9,4)
- 14 See 19
- 16 2 19, 4,2)
- 18 Went out without a centim being on a high (7)
- 19, 14 Tense 28 in funny shape — that's heaven (9,9)
- 20 This is how ready the City to enter (6)
- 23 Polo on a gondola at the Savoy? (5)

S S S S F D
 N E S T R A I N U O P R O F I T
 A F A R A T V N O R I O
 A F A R A D M I N I S T R A T I O N
 C R E A S E O B T U S
 E R R O R N T
 R A S I C S I G N O R E
 I N A U L
 R E P T I L E S P O S T E
 F A R A L O P
 U N F A I R N E S S E C H
 E T G E I N A S A N
 A S H O R E P R E A S A N
 T R O S E T

Blanchester
Telephone 3161-832 7200.
Fax 0161-832 5361/834 9717.
Telephones sales 0161-634 8686

 **NEWSPAPERS
SUPPORT
RECYCLING**
Recycled paper made
up 41.4% of the new

Today March 10 1960

Why the C
needs his



The American Medical Association has announced that it will support legislation to require health care providers to report child abuse or neglect.

**Inquiry
call o
Maze
death**

Editorial
and Correspondent

T

[illegible]

old man
 was
 ing
 and
 gods.
 The
 killing
 Stephen
 Mc
 me
 the
 man
 and
 the
 and
 his

...the ...
...are al ...
...McWinn ...
...Secretary ...
...Chief ...
...1964 ...
...1964 ...
...1964 ...
...But ...
...with ...
...denial ...
...were ...
...with ...
...The ...

Inside **Em**